

proposition is either true or false, the answer being written in some eternal, ethereal book, though we do not (yet) know which answer it is. However, it was shown by Gödel and Cohen that neither the truth nor the falsity of the continuum hypothesis can be derived from the standard Zermelo-Fraenkel-Skolem axioms (end rules of procedure) of set theory. So to a formalist (or at least one who plays this particular Zermelo-Fraenkel-Skolem game) the continuum hypothesis is an undecidable proposition. Thus we find on page 225 the statement "Only in 1963 was it (the continuum hypothesis) finally settled" and on page 231 "there now exists a complete solution of the continuum problem" (meaning, in each case, that it was shown to be independent of the Zermelo-Fraenkel-Skolem axioms - this is the formalist speaking), while on page 236 we find "the truth of the continuum hypothesis remains undecided" (Platonist speaking). The Platonist's position on this question is considerably clarified on page 394.

I think that it is time for me to come into the open concerning my own position on these matters - though perhaps it was already clear from my introductory remarks. I am an unabashed and unrepentant Platonist! Thus I feel a glow of satisfaction when I read those passages where strong Platonist arguments are brought to bear against the formalist position (as is quite effectively done in certain places) and a corresponding (mild) irritation when, instead, a formalist viewpoint seems to be adopted.

Perhaps the major instance of the latter occurs in the section on non-Cantorian set theory. The analogy is made with the development of non-Euclidean geometry. For many centuries Euclidean geometry was believed to be obviously "true" and the only kind of geometry imaginable. Only in the early nineteenth century did it become apparent that alternative, equally consistent geometries can be constructed. (There are some curious errors in the otherwise excellent account of these ideas given in this book. The claimed equivalence between various forms of Euclid's fifth postulate is actually invalid when the stated interpretation is made which allows Riemann's elliptic model. More serious is the authors' confusion between Riemann's elliptic model and the more general concept of Riemannian geometry, which leads to an incorrect expression for the metric - and triangle area for the elliptic case.) The authors make the suggestion that Cantor's set theory may be like Euclidean geometry in that it is only one among several alternative equally consistent schemes. Like non-Euclidean geometries, there may be non-Cantorian set theories in which the continuum hypothesis is true and others in which it is false.

However, in my opinion the analogy is a misleading one. My reasons spring from an argument - the strongest argument yet made for Platonism and against formalism - which, rather surprisingly, is not given anywhere in the book. This argument rests on an interpretation of the famous incompleteness theorem of Gödel. (Perhaps the authors felt that there was no need for a discussion of Gödel's theorem since their book's title-mate, Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, devotes so much attention to this theorem - though, search as I will, I can find no clear expression of this necessary interpretation even in that book.) Gödel's theorem states, we recall, that any formalist system (axioms and rules of procedure) which is strong enough to contain arithmetic (with existential statements) must also contain well-defined propositions neither whose truth nor falsity can be established within the system. However - and this is my point - the very propositions which are thrown up by the Gödel procedure become obviously true statements about the integers that the formalist system is trying to describe. For from showing that there are undecidable propositions, Gödel's theorem actually shows that it is only the formalist which is inevitably inadequate. The Gödel procedure supplies a new mode of valid "proof" which lies outside whatever rules have been previously laid down as admissible by the narrow formalist view. (And, incidentally, herein lies one of the true

ly profound "mysteries" to which I referred at the beginning.)

I have never been able to understand how the strict formalist view can be continued to be upheld in the light of Gödel's devastating (but apparently still largely unappreciated) argument. In this book it is stated that Gödel was, indeed, himself a Platonist. But these reasons (presumably) for Gödel's viewpoint are not presented.

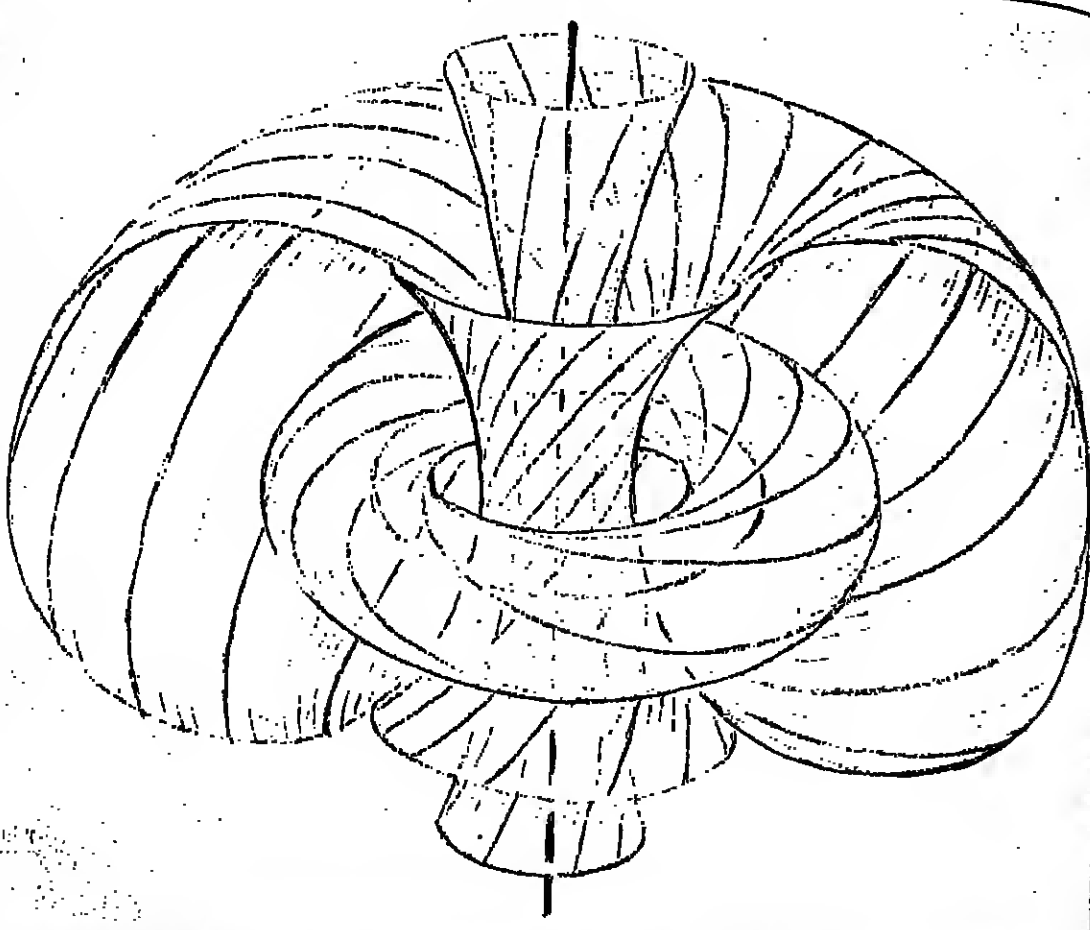
In my opinion the analogy between the original Gödel incompleteness theorem and the later Gödel-Cohen result is much more pertinent than the analogy between the latter and non-Euclidean geometries. We have no clear reason to believe, as yet, that non-Cantorian set theories can exist, when the Gödel procedures of his incompleteness theorem are admitted as intuitively valid (Platonistic) methods of proof.

This is not to say that the Platonist viewpoint is itself free of difficulties. In fact there seems to be no completely satisfactory viewpoint, so far, on the foundations of mathematics. (Perhaps I should keep quiet about that!) The main difficulty, as I see it, is that Platonism supplies (as yet) no clear prescription for avoiding the paradoxes of set theory while the subjectivity and time-dependence of constructivism renders that third viewpoint totally unacceptable.

On the other hand, I do not regard the apparent difference in kind between the Platonic "existence" of mathematical concepts and the more familiar type of "existence" enjoyed by actual physical objects as an insurmountable obstacle to the Platonist view. For physical existence itself is not quite what it seems, and cannot be completely divorced from its Platonic counterpart. What could have a clearer physical existence than a commonplace object such as a table? Yet, as Edgington once so predictably emphasized, if we wish to predict accurately how that table will behave, not just if we bump it with our fists, but also if we put a match with x-rays or with neutrons, then we must use increasingly abstract mathematical models to describe it. How are we to understand the neutrons, quarks, electromagnetic field quanta and slightly curved (presumably quantized) space-time, of which the table is supposed to be composed, except in highly mathematical terms? Do we understand what it means for these supposedly physical ingredients to "exist" except in terms of that mathematics whose very (Platonic) existence is being questioned? It is clear that we are far from understanding of such profound and nebulous matters. I wish merely to point out here that physical existence itself is something we do not understand. In fact we understand it less than mathematical existence, so to invoke such arguments against the Platonic ideal, as is done to this book, seems to be a dangerous game.

I hope I am not appearing to give undue weight to what are some very minor criticisms of an excellent and essentially unique book. Though it is technical in places (mainly in the middle of the book, getting presumably easier for the lay reader at both ends) these technicalities should not deter the lay reader. As the authors suggest in their preface: "Have the reader may feel like a guest at a family dinner" and should "judiciously and lightly push on". Likewise, the sensitive English reader will forgive them their occasional lapses into post-Watergate Americanisms, technical jargon (such as the claim that "depth" in mathematics is essentially synonymous with "difficulty of proof" - which would seem as "ahistorical" as Cantor's profound observation that there are more real numbers than rationals), and mild historical unfairness (such as the lack of any mention of Baudouin who, in the 14th century BC, resolved the "eternity" of Pythagorean discovery of irrationality, setting geometry and analysis on its odd misprisoned and jumbled path). The uniqueness of this book drives, benefits, frustrates, and delights of the activities of the working mathematical community.

I hope it obtains the wide readership that it deserves.



This geometrical configuration of "Clifford parallel" projected into Euclidean space is an example of a mathematical structure which has both visual appeal and various applications within mathematics and physics; drawn by Roger Penrose.

The philosopher's postbag

By K. H. D. Haley

R. S. de BEER (Editor)
The Correspondence of John Locke,
Volume 7
798pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £45.
0 19 824564 5

Of this correspondence, amounting to some 3,600 letters to and from John Locke, and constituting the largest collection attached to any English author of the seventeenth century, the volume under review contains 622, or over one-sixth, relating to the years 1700 to 1703 around his seventieth birthday. There are nearly twice as many letters as remain for the whole of his youth and middle age down to 1675, when he was forming his ideas; most readers would give the greatest deal of the reverse was true. Moreover, with a few exceptions such as the exchange of letters with Limborch, many of them are comparatively trivial, relating often to small commissions for the scholar in his retirement at Oates in Essex. They refer to the supply of oranges, cocoa, and even on one occasion two pairs of socks. They sometimes, even on other subjects, tempt the thought that they would be little intrinsic importance - were they not written by, or addressed to, John Locke.

This, however, is an important qualification, and it means that they do help to form a picture of the great man in old age. Only for a few days could he stay in London; the old long tiring to bed for a long period, and ear trouble. He was, apart from his ailments, the comfort and cosseted guest of Sir Francis and Lady Masham, surviving into his seventies as a result of their care and his own self-disciplined regimen, precise and dependent for stimulation upon the company of visitors (who have a succession of affectionate friends he needed; not merely books but news of old friends and of the world around. And many wrote asking for medical advice or for recommendations to Pembroke and others who could provide advancement.

The result covers a weird assemblage of subjects: colonial matters at

least as long as he served on the Board of Trade, the East India Company, bison wool, the purchase of lottery tickets, Maccabean medals, the alleged influence of Pythagoras upon the Brahmins, barometers, the magnetic variation of the compass, remedies for earache, and Lady Masham's "pair of green spectacles in leather frames". His cousin's son, Peter King, answered an endless set of inquiries about possible investment, whether in mortgages or East India stock, for Locke's money; for, neglect the businesslike administration and enhancement of what he had accumulated.

It is, indeed, with King that about a quarter of these letters are exchanged. Besides the investments and the family relationship, King became MP for Bere Alston in 1701 and could meet his political interests. Of the continuance of Locke's Whiggery, there can be no doubt. He was alive to the French danger, and pressed upon King the idea that until the crisis following the death of Charles II of Spain was resolved King ought to be in his place at Westminster instead of following his legal practice on the Western circuit. He wrote asking for a list of the members returned at the election of 1701. It is true that by October, 1702, he was writing to Furlly in Rotterdam that "whether it be satisfactory to be dying, or to acquaint myself with the bias or bent of affairs, only I shall always be glad to hear of public events that tend to the prosperity and preservation of my country, and the security of my Europe", and "I have held by the simplicity of troubling my head about things that I cannot give the least turn to one way or other. . . . You chimney corner in some obscure hole. But this mood was not permanent, and even though ill health had forced him to give up the Board of Trade, he continued, for instance, to take a keen interest in the controversies over occasional conformity.

It seems that this was reflected more in Locke's conversations with King than his letters; for in the last resort it was talk that he wanted rather than letters. "Under the blockade of my old enemy Winter", he is to be found appealing "your conversation would be a great relief to the prisoner", and again: "You know I have not much conversation here but what is of the growth of the

place [Oates] which after so long living together doth not upon every assembly afford variety of new matter. Your coming therefore not in haste as to one with whom you have business but to let me have your company for some time (a thing yet have never done yet) will be very acceptable". He wanted, as he said, to "enjoy" King. The tone of much of his correspondence suggests indeed that for all his facility with the pen, he may have been better at talk; for there is a real atmosphere of affection to be found in letters from all classes of society; he was a querulous old invalid.

It is difficult to imagine anyone better equipped than E. S. de Beer in all his range of learning, to assemble the variety of topics covered here. A footnote on the *Postscript* may be considered typical; but he does not obtrude his learning between the text and the reader, his comments are at once succinct, reliable and useful, and he nowhere pretends to know when the evidence is inadequate. Every misspelling, mispunctuation and deletion is recorded; one might say literally almost every mark upon the paper. Only the Greek accents have been silently corrected. It is difficult to imagine many readers needing to go behind these texts to the original, and even when these texts have been printed before, they have been printed in context, in chronological order, with annotations. It is appropriate, too, to express appreciation of the elegance and accuracy of Dr de Beer's translations of the correspondence in Latin with Limborch; perhaps sometimes he knows the exact shade of meaning of the Latin word employed better than the writers themselves. There cannot be many subjects more difficult than a discussion of the human will, carried on in Latin, with Locke basing himself on the English text of his Essay and Limborch first on Coste's French translation and then on Burnet's not very satisfactory Latin translation of it; but a philosophical discussion presents no more difficulty to de Beer as translator than the dealing of a letter or the tracking down of an obscure reference.

Apart from the steadily rising price of this edition we can have no complaints about it in quality; and we can only hope that Dr de Beer will long be spared to see the last volume through the press and to receive the many congratulations which will come his way.

The blossoming of the ultimate weed

By Andrew Motion

DUNCAN FALLOWELL and APRIL ASHLEY:
April Ashley's Odyssey
287pp. Cape, £8.50.
0 224 01849 3

"Strasbourg, Court of Human Rights at; suicide attempt; *Sunday Mirror*; surgery". An extract from April Ashley's index gives a good idea of her *Odyssey*. It is, she says, "very personal" in anatomical as well as emotional terms, and yet circumstances have conspired to make much of her life seem unreal to the point of remoteness. This is not simply because the facts of her transsexual life are unusual, but because obscure to the scandal they created has been to cultivate a social world which is also pretty peculiar. The longer her celebrity has lasted, the more she has sought - until the last few years - to immerse herself in the (to most of us) exotic world of the Fekless Rich. Her intention, obviously, has been to discover some of the stability which money and titles seem to offer; the effect has been to unearth a phantasmagoria of snobs. "The kind of nobleman who appeals to me", she unblushingly admits, "is the 3rd Marquis of Hertford, who in 1848, the Year of Revolutions, could say without nunciate: 'I have a place in Wales which I have never seen, but they tell me it's very fine. A dinner for twelve is served there every day... the butler eats it'."

The causes for this fixation are sympathetic, in a way, but the fixation itself usually seems extravagant and idiotic. So does the style in which

it is evoked. Between them she and Duncan Fallowell have more or less exactly captured the diction which certain actors have evolved as their own unmistakable language. It is camp, precious, hyperbolic, and punctuated with shrieks and giggles. On education, for instance: "My schooldays - such a torture. Those nuns, those priests, those hopeless teachers, those disgusting children!" Or on a trip to Canada: "Canada. Brrrr! And quiet. Our northernmost call was Woodbine, an isolated lumberjack settlement with one coffee bar, where, surprise, we took on timber." This sort of thing is an achievement, of a kind, but it is hard to take for long. The reason for its appearance, however, is as easy to define as her social infatuation. Although the flashy superficialities also help to invite criticism, they also help a protective covering. They obscure the outline of what April Ashley understandably feels to be a distinctive - and therefore exposed and vulnerable - personality, and lose her in a glittering mass of types.

Given these explanations for the *Odyssey's* ambience and tone, its excesses can be related to its main purpose: "to explain a little" the trials and traumas of changing sex. And when April Ashley is discussing these directly, she is much more straightforward. The urgency of her need to explain forces her to give up theatrical flourishes and winks, and produce, at the centre of the book, a literary version of the tough pragmatism she must have needed in life. In essence, her *Odyssey* is not only very interesting, but touching and brave, and projects a personality of quite exceptional resilience. She was born a boy, George Jamieson, in a slum district of Liverpool in 1935, and being "the ultimate weed" was a target for bullying as soon as school

began: "Scarcely a day passed when I was not subjected to some barbarism by the local tough boys, so that I was forced upon me a sense of my own uniqueness." This was fostered by more than victimization. As an adolescent, George Jamieson's effeminate good looks showed no signs of disappearing. There was no trace of public hair on his body, and he felt radically unlit for the demands of the stereotyped male world. But instead of shirking these demands, he opted for a career which he half hoped and half feared would solve his dilemma: he joined the merchant navy. In the short term it was a disaster; the aggressively macho taunts of his companions drove him to despair. At the same time, though, they helped to sharpen his sense of where his salvation lay: "I was convinced a monstrous mistake had been made and only my being a woman could correct it. There were no fantasies about dressing in such and such a way. I merely wanted to be whole."

Discharged, and back in London, the hopelessness of his situation deepened until he attempted suicide. He was only saved by his own incompetence. But as well as bringing his predicament to a crisis, London also gave him the support of a sympathetic and similarly ostracized demimonde. One friend, Rocky, memorably advised him to concentrate less on his physical plight than on using his head to discover a reasonable solution: "If God had intended the genitals to be as important as the brain He'd have put a skull round them." The problem, however, was not so much what to do, but where, and how - sex changes in those days (the 1950s) were even rarer and more expensive than now. Proper medical studies of transsexualism were not carried out until the late

1960s, and in so far as the condition was generally acknowledged before that, it was only as a result of popular accounts like Nick Hoyer's *Man Into Woman* (1933), or sensationalized cases like Christine Jorgensen's. George Jamieson realized that if he was to have the operation at all, it was unlikely to be in England, so he left for Europe - and after working for several years in a cabaret in Paris, was given the address of a doctor in Casablanca. April Ashley's account of the surgery, and her remarkably painful recuperation, is emphatically matter-of-fact: "The operation lasted 7 hours and involved removal of the testes, surgery on the outer genitalia, and the construction of a vagina. . . . The brilliance of Doctor Burou's technique was that he did this retaining the maximum nerve tissue and inverting it into a vaginal lining so that erogenous sensitivity was not destroyed."

And that, one might think, would be the beginning of that. The operation was a complete success, the confusions between transsexual proper and transvestism or homosexuality had been historically resolved, the relationship between an internal choice of sex and external appearance had been agreed, and George Jamieson went back to England as himself, or as Toni April (his Parisian stage name) but as April Ashley. For as long as the story of her past was kept from the press, it was a triumphant return: modelling jobs galore, the Fekless Rich in abundance, and a constant flow of name-droppers whose names could be (and are) constantly dropped. But once the story broke, which it soon did, her life threatened to grind to a halt. What saved her at the time turned out, eventually, to be a catastrophe: she got married. For temper-

amental rather than any other reasons, she and her husband almost immediately separated, and the only terms on which she could retain her preferred social world were not easy. She was branded as a freak, a notorious oddity. The energy she devoted to freeing herself from this stigma was characteristically enormous, but the price she paid was high. It meant suffering numerous rebuffs, assiduously seeking out the right people, and dedicatedly following fashion in order to remain in everyone's good books. But in the 1960s much of the ground she had won was taken from her. When her court, they involved her in humiliations which once again damaged her sense of stable identity. Because the court decided that she had not been a woman at the time of her marriage, it officially declined her to be an outsider - a third sex without many rights and privileges.

For what must have seemed like the umpteenth time, she set herself to work creating another society - by running a restaurant in London and wooing the rich and famous to dine there. In a sense, it was the apotheosis of her affair with the good life, but its success was comparatively short. Ill, impoverished, and unable to sustain the pace she set herself, she moved to Hay-on-Wye, where she lives now. In many cases, such a change might suggest a retreat; in this one it looks more like the beginning of a new campaign. Although there is a good deal of sadness in the *Odyssey's* final pages, they pose a question which, for all its schmalzy phrasing, sounds like the beginning of independent self-realisation: "When you place your sense of identity in the reflections you see in other people's eyes, what happens when the people go away?"

Dressed to mislead

By Lorna Sage

ALISON LURIE:
The Language of Clothes
266pp. Heinemann, £10.
0 434 43 906 1

Robinson Crusoe, alone on his island, determined to salvage his identity, has three priorities: ink, gunpowder, and clothes. Gulliver, among the Houyhnhnms, tries desperately to conceal from his noble, nude, reasonable, stallion Master that his clothes come off. When they do, he's revealed as a disgusting Yahoo, vicious, weak and shapeless. It's no accident either that Swift's Houyhnhnms have no language of written signs. There is an oral culture, with no word for lying. When we talk of the "language" of clothes, as Alison Lurie does in this book, we are talking, really, about a literate language (for example, fashion) - a language that is intensely unreasonable, designed for lying, and essential for self-love, or even for self-torment.

It seems fitting, therefore, that as a novelist of manners, Alison Lurie should confess herself also "an amateur in the history of costume." She dismisses from the beginning the notion that clothing is or could ever be merely useful, and the twin idea that fashion is only a commercial conspiracy. Our clothes express our native craziness.

Imagine for instance a transparent sequined evening blouse over a gilly Victorian cotton petticoat and black rubber galoshes; (I have observed this getup in real life; it was worn to a lunch party at a famous Irish country house.)

This "lady" (assuming it was) is perhaps more a character for Carroll than for Lurie's own fiction. She takes tend towards what one might call the routinely bizarre: for example, the possible ritual procedures for disposing of a garment once borrowed from an ex-lover.

An especially refined form of black magic is to give the garment away to the Salvation Army, in the hope that it will soon be worn by a drunken, incontinent, stumpy, ideally, someplace where your former lover will see and recognise it. The language analogy highlights both the private or paranoid functions of clothes, and their (ambivalent) communality. One of the main points here is that "change" in fashion very often turns out to mean borrowing the style of the other sex, or of another generation. Ms Lurie is of course interested in the sexual trade in clothes, and in the fact that (transvestites and Scotsmen notwithstanding) it casts women as the borrowers, but she's more riveted (and disturbed) by the thought that female "liberation" from elaborate and constricting costumes - whether in 1810, with the advent of simple muslin frocks and thin pumps, or in the 1960s with the miniskirt - seems to have taken the form of dressing like a toddler. Fashion may be, as she says (conjuring a grey vision of a phalanx of Communist-bloc athletes), "fres speech", but it gives a very ironic twist to freedom.

The well-dressed, liberated woman is encouraged, for instance, to be sleek and refined on the job, glowingly energetic on holiday, sweetly domestic at home, . . . irresistibly sexy in the presence of . . . her "spouse-equivalent" . . . personality itself has become an adjunct of conspicuous Waste.

Male uniformity, in the form of the sack suit that "deforms the athlete and disguises the weakling" (shade of Swift) seems almost enviable - a version of integrity ("Men . . . are not supposed to have more than one personality, one real self").

This adds up to a fairly bleak view of recent "advances" towards: unless clothing, Ms Lurie suggests we're on the brink of "new" corseted, bobbled decade. However, her account of the past two hundred years has ambivalence: she doesn't really do justice to The nineteenth century seems to

have two quite different scenarios, in one of which women "grow up" from childish muslin to become lavishly upholstered, late Victorian "Junks, who take up a lot of space, not just in drawing rooms, but in public life; while in the other they are seen as progressively corseted and weighed down into immobility. The contradiction becomes obvious when you unite these plots in the person of a fiercely corseted suffragette. Bondage by clothes may have more perverse potentialities than Ms Lurie is willing to allow.

And this, really, is the trouble with *The Language of Clothes* - that Alison Lurie is not the kind of fiction-writer who relies on gothic or speculative idioms, and you probably need to be to make sense of the fantasies that - as the book's illustrations splendidly demonstrate - transform us moment by moment. There is no photograph of the author to show where she stands now, but her section on "Bohemian Black" ("One of the longest-lasting styles of this century . . . basic garment - a black turtle-neck sweater paired with a full black or coloured skirt") is more than usually approving, and the "Fashion and Sex" chapter confides that "simple black underthings are often worn by thoughtful, intellectual women who take sex very seriously". Her sub-text is austere, and superior, and in the end rather impatient with our theatrical neuroses. Secretly, she is a bluestocking.

Letters from Collette (214pp. Virago Press, £6.95; 0 86068 252 8) selected and translated by Robert Phelps has recently been published. The letters cover the years 1902 - 52, her chief correspondents are Marguerite Moreno, Hélène Pocard and Renée Hamon. Occasional letters are addressed to such famous contemporaries as Francis James, Marcel Proust and François Mauriac. Phelps comments in his introductory notes: "There is good gossip and intelligent malice and, indeed, tenderness of every page; and, above all, *par de littérature*"

May Books

Fiction

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Hodder & Stoughton

with such intercourse should be interrupted: at the same time I felt, without having any definite cause of complaint, that the experience of the last two terms slued it was not well for us to be too entirely together, and that, if I intended myself to pursue steadily the resolutions I had formed, I must be prepared to find we should on some occasions not be suitable companions. It is a tribute to his magnetism that he usually managed to patch up the damage after one of these letters, but it must have been unnerve to receive such a cool assessment of one's failings as a friend.

Poor Gladstone, inordinately sensitive to any affront by Hallam, went so far as to draw up a summary of the course of their friendship from 1824 to 1829, detailing each slackening of affection, each reconciliation, wondering at last whether he could even call himself Hallam's friend. Professor Kolb says that one letter of Gladstone's in 1830 is "like the anguished outcry of a rejected lover." In his reply to it Hallam smoothed over his apparent neglect of Gladstone, but at the same time he felt impelled to write: "Now if you mean that such intercourse as we had at Eton is not likely again to fall to our lot, this is undoubtedly a stern truth."

Although he could be amusingly aware of Tennyson's failings, Hallam wrote of them with constant affection, and the evidence here is that it was only with him and James Milnes Gaskell that he maintained long and untroubled familiarity. It is impossible not to wonder whether some of his censoriousness may have sprung from his continual illness, running as it does like a dark and unperceived thread all through his correspondence until his sudden death from an aneurysm in 1833. Not the least of his worries was his intermittent fear that he might go insane.

Even Tennyson's sister Emily, to whom Hallam finally became en-

gaged after the long joint efforts of their relatives to separate them, was occasionally the butt of his teasing in a way that is hard to forgive unless we assume the combined effects of illness, sexual frustration, worry over Emily's health, and perhaps a nagging sense that the two of them were ill suited, in spite of the strength of his longing for her. When she was depressed or seemed insufficiently enthusiastic about the lessons and the languages he set her to learn, he was apt to write to Emily about the brilliance of his social acquaintance and his flirtations with a series of young ladies including Fanny Kemble, Charlotte Sotheby, the handsome Miss Morris, and other charming to whom he referred only by their Christian names. Nor was he tactful about evoking the memory of Anna Wintour, with whom he had fancied himself in love when he was seventeen and she nearly a decade older. To his surprise Emily did not always make a quick recovery after such a letter. As Kolb indicates, it is questionable whether he and Emily could ever have been happy in marriage if he had lived.

Even after an edition of his letters totalling some 850 pages, the question of what Hallam was really like is not completely settled: whether he was the godlike paragon that the Apostles so admired and that Henry Alford recognized as the "most wonderful person altogether I ever knew" or whether John Ruskin better characterized him as "the accomplished, vain, philosophic Hallam." But finally no answer of that kind is required, and surely no biography of him will ever be needed, as it was in the case of Rupert Brooke, that later and equally golden Cambridge undergraduate. What ultimately seems most important about Hallam is not the truth of his own personality and accomplishments but his effect upon others.

The late T. H. Vail Motter began the preliminary stages of this edition



Arthur Hallam reading Walter Scott aloud on a voyage from Bordeaux to Dublin, September 9, 1830. Tennyson in profile. A contemporary water-colour reproduction in Tennyson and His Friends edited by Hallam Lord.

some forty years ago. The present edition does not indicate how much of the final version is his own work, but most of the annotation seems to be his. Nearly all the information that any reader might require who was completely unacquainted with the facts of Hallam's life is voluminously supplied. It is unlikely that it will ever be necessary to re-edit or add to these letters. Sometimes, indeed, the apparatus of the footnotes seems to take on a sinister life of its own, as one is referred to a note, only to find that the note is merely a direction to look elsewhere at another note, which in turn refers solely to yet another note, and so on until the

reader feels that he is on a solipsistic treasure-hunt and gives up without completing the chase. The style of the introduction and notes is least graceful when dealing with names and titles. The present Lady Elton and her family may well be startled to find her described as "the scion of the maternal branch of [the Hallam] family, Lady Margaret Elton." Apparently the editor is he lapses into elegant antonomastic variations, referring, for example, to Gladstone as "the four-time prime minister" and to Tennyson as "the Bard" or "the Laureate." And there is a disconcertingly chummy air

about the references to the chief figures in Hallam's life by their Christian names; his father is constantly called simply "Henry," and even William Ewart. On the other hand Tennyson as a young man is introduced as "Mr. Alfred Tennyson" but unnecessarily called "Alfred" when he is in his mid-seventies. Arthur Hallam once wrote about a review of the poems of Alfred and Charles Tennyson by Leigh Hunt: "You will be amused with the odd style of his observations and the frank familiarity with which he calls them by their Christian names, just as if he had supped with them a hundred times."

The course of grief

By Michael Mason

SUSAN SHATTO and MARION SHAW (Editors)
Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'
397pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £25.
0 19 812747 2

A well-known episode in the annals of English literary scholarship was the prohibition, formerly placed by the dooms of the Trinity manuscript, on their being published, or even copied. That prohibition was lifted in 1969, just after the appearance of Christopher Ricks's great edition of *The Complete Poems*. The relaxation has now resulted in this majestic and very capable edition of *In Memoriam*, in which all the Trinity material, as well as all other published or unpublished variants, is fully cited. A certain sense of euphoric doubt opening on skeletons must attach to this volume. How much of a thrill will the reader get from the new pieces of text?

The answer has to be: not much. Indeed, on the evidence of this edition, the prohibition seems puzzling for there is nothing shocking in the Trinity *In Memoriam* material; nor, with the exception of a single stanza in section 81 (with its striking image of a blind boy), and the additional poem "The light that shone," which Ricks published in the *TLS* once the ban was lifted, does there appear to be any major variant which has not become available to scholars by other routes.

The Trinity *In Memoriam* is a very different poem from the one printed from 1850 onwards, albeit in ways that could have been identified by anyone willing to put in some hard work among the unrestricted papers and the published scholarship. The importance of this new edition is that the whole picture — of *In Memoriam* at every stage of its growth, as far as this is known — is now assembled in one place. Its unevenness is therefore not a fault, but it is fair to ask: how much do

the editors make of the picture? How much insight does their own commentary afford into the long process of mutation which they accurately record?

There are two Trinity manuscripts. One, certainly the earlier, is a hotbed of variants of about a half-dozen sections. It dates from the mid-1830s, and is, as Shatto and Shaw emphasize, the first surviving manuscript in which *In Memoriam* lyrics are treated as a sequence, though it very probably does not represent the beginning of this idea. The second manuscript is a volume in long, narrow format containing seventy-odd sections, and it seems to have been completed in 1842. Shatto and Shaw hold the view that it contains the Trinity's "final intention": at this date, "with respect to a tribute to Arthur Hallam." They grant that the blank spaces separating each section (generally a reminder of the recto, and all the verso, of a "flexibility" about this. In fact there are thirty-six sections between the first and second Christmas episodes, and only seven between the second and third. Presumably Tennyson envisaged filling out the latter chronological bracket, with considerably more material before he would have published; just as in the Humington notebook (probably written in the latter 1830s), the first Christmas poem (30), and the second (78) are adjacent: which, suggests, interestingly, that these manuscripts sometimes served as skeletons for the whole structure of the poem.

With these reservations, it seems probable that the Trinity "ledger" is a first, abandoned, version of *In Memoriam*. Shatto and Shaw well bring out how very different it feels from the ending of the poem would have been in this version, as well as Tennyson's changing ideas about how the ending should be handled (a problem that constantly recurs in the history of the poem's composition; with the movement from grief to operation). At one stage, it seems that the poem was to have concluded with the line: "For the light that shone, I cannot think the thing farewell."

the end of the quintessential section 123 ("There rolls the deep..."). Even this was an afterthought, and a means of developing the last lines of section 57, a previous candidate for closing position: "And 'Ave, Ave, Ave', said, 'Adieu, adieu' evermore" (a poem that, as some early commentators acutely observed, has a note of finality). Tennyson tried to incorporate at least five other sections into the closing sequence of this 1842 *In Memoriam*, only to reject them.

But Shatto and Shaw do not develop the implications of all this for the version that was eventually published. Section 57 remained, of course. Its bleakness, too strong as a final statement, is actually much enhanced by following, and making reference to, sections 55 and 56, the celebrated, appalled descriptions of nature's prodigality and destructiveness. Even more remarkably, the long section 95, whose subject is the doubt-stricken but ecstatic dusk/dawn, traces in which "the living soul was dashed on mine" — the climax of the poem — was probably already written by 1842, though it was not included in the Trinity version.

In other words, the growth of *In Memoriam* involved a stretching of the poles of grief and consolation; stretch that was easily experienced, but could not initially be accommodated. It is a fascinating story of the earlier arrangements sometimes survived in a peculiar way. In the Trinity notebook section 9 was followed by section 17, in which its closing line ("More than my brothers are to brother, is to me"); thereafter the two sections are separated, the word "is" changed, but a new link between them is substituted in the line: "Till all my midday race be run."

So much depends on sequence and timing, aspects which were surely Tennyson's most important in writing this poem, and which are, unfortunately, lost to the experience of reading it. Yet Shatto and Shaw are

almost nervously evasive about such matters. There is no reason, they say, to doubt Tennyson's famous statement that "he did not write the sections with any view of weaving them into a whole... until I found that I had written so many." But controversy has always attended this remark, as to the meaning of "so many", and it is implicitly settled in this edition by the careful display of the evidence. The verdict is not clear that Tennyson was thinking of a year of Hallam's death, within an incessant exposure to this text damage an editor's sense of its contours; they are, after all, labile matters, to do with feeling, and there is a possibility for plasticity in the reading of *In Memoriam* comparable to that which Tennyson experienced, and drew on, in writing it. But to observe that their motif, that of a gap between the uttered feeling and an unuttered anguish, is "touched on" in section 5 is to ignore a glaring fact: we (and Tennyson or, preferably, the "mourner") are now more aware of what is the reason for the recurrence of such material at this pole?

This is *In Memoriam* commentary in the bad old manner, and in the spirit of the anthologies which quarried the poem for single lyrics. It is also without usefulness. No intelligent reader will require such elementary paraphrase, or the information that sections 67-71 "are linked in their descriptions of a poet's sleep and dreams", or that, in section 80, "the poet imagines the death of his friend, of his own about the task they have set themselves in their roles. Sometimes they speak at it this was a variorum of Tennyson: his contemporaries, and the critics. But on some topics they make a strong showing in their own right, especially on the matter of Tennyson's debt to certain classical genres, about which their comments are fresh and instructive. *In Memoriam* is, undeniably, an

obsessive poem. It requires exegesis not of the patchy kind offered here, and not pitched in this way. The editors worry away at problems that are scarcely problematical (usually because they have attracted laborious attention in the past), and in their hands an "obscurity" becomes an interesting thing: no more than a poor piece of expression, to be cleared up. The obscurity of *In Memoriam* is of many kinds; some of it is no doubt irritating, but some is profound. The whole work (meaning here the numbered sequence) starts off with a particularly obscure reference to Goethe. This is an instance of what Churton Collins (in connection with "the silent years" / That breathed beneath the Syrian blue" in section 82) called "Tennysonese": obscurity that results from an idiosyncratic periphrasis. But the spectrum runs from here all the way to Eliot-like effects, as in section 88:

O tell me where the senses mis,
O tell me where the passions meet,
Whence radiate fierce extremes, empty
Thy spirits to the darkening leaf.

Somewhere, along the line come those long descriptions of nature, with their bafflingly unfixed viewpoints, of which the Christmas poem, "It is the day...", contains perhaps the most extreme example.

Among the examples of Tennysonese that could have been clarified are the first verses of sections 82 and 90. There is no comment at all on sections 20 and 125 (though there are certain number in the book). Section 124 has extremely teasing syntax and logic, which is ignored. What is section 3 about, or section 347? On a smaller scale, there are familiar, but difficult formulations in the poem, such as "merit lives from man to man" / And not from man, O Lord, to thee" / or "truths in manhood darkly join / Deep-seated in our mystic frame" / "Mystic frame" is used by Tennyson twice. What is connection with "sensitive frame" in section 52? Finally, does this section really evoke the least reference to evolution, the Victorian commentators?

HALLAM TENNYSON (Editor):
Studies in Tennyson
230p. Macmillan, £15.
0 333 27884 4

In literary history, chronology — whereby one thing amiably issues in another — has been supplanted, in recent critical thinking, by a dire version of genealogy, which argues deterministically that writers are fated and foreknown by their predecessors. Now, instead of creating the world anew, the writer is seen to be engaged in a desperate or devious reuniting of genes. Literature and its grim predilection is the nightmare from which each writer seeks to escape. He has, of course, no chance of succeeding: not even the words he uses originate with him, since they're all hand-downs.

Studies in Tennyson contains no ideological programme, nor are the essays in it coerced into any fashionable unity, but its most interesting contributions are all concerned with the casualties of, and the parodic possibilities for escape from, a literary history which has been con-

diluted by the past, victimized by inheritance. Tennyson is a suitable case for such treatment, being doubly the depressed legate of the past. On the one hand he feared the lincture of madness to the blood of his family; on the other he was cowed by those classical and epic literary ancestors whose worthy offspring he struggled to be. But, weighed down by the past, he managed in restitution to decree the future, bequeathing to his family the task of memorializing him. His son Hallam published the first biography in 1877, his grandson Charles produced another in 1948. It's clear that Sir Charles Tennyson, whose two essays in this volume, one by his own son Hallam and the other by Robert Bernard Martin, are devoted — felt the intimidation and inhibition of ancestry, which loomed on the poet Tennyson and which in different ways handicaps all poets. He expressed this in a simple, artlessly Cyprian image. Contrasting his own condition with the looming presence of his grandfather, he said that Tennyson "was a dominant height, who made every subsequent event in my life seem rather flat."

The metaphor of the dominant height places Tennyson in the psychological landscape of Burke's infinite fears and desires. Burke's dual categories of the sublime and the beautiful have power over us because they dapple as opposed, the affection of the mother; the procreancy of the sublime, like the mountain peaks which stalk and accuse the young Wordsworth, or the "dominant height" of the older Tennyson — terrifically because they embody the baleful authority of the father, who has biologically pre-empted us. Charles Tennyson was sure that the story of his life had been another, as if his grandfather had prevented him from acquiring an identity of his own. His autobiography begins by admitting, "I suppose the most important influence in my life... has been the fact that I am a grandson of the great poet of the Victorian era."

The sentence compounds the problem by its piling-up of awesome titles: Tennyson's greatness is also the law of a patriarchal and momentous historical period. The critical history of literature proceeds as a warfare between these generations. Hence Victorian elders he jeeringly called "elders" or Harold Nicolson's attack on Tennyson for having chosen to become a national institution.

Critical vicissitudes like those suffered by Tennyson and other Victorian Bloomsburys are a rejection of the toppling of defunct gods. W. R. Robson's contribution to the book protests against the current devaluation of Tennyson, and claims that it's due to the whimsicality of fashion. But there's a more lethal logic to it than this. Literary reputations are patrimony, a largesse from which we can only liberate ourselves by conspicuous ingratitude. Tennyson himself hints at this need to disown national paragon in his "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington", which seems only too eager to enter and dispose of its subject. Wellington's eminence can only be sustained by verbal excess:

Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Or by the fatuity of repetition:
... with honour, honour, honour to him
Eternal honour to his name.

The poem also commits a subversion of ceremony by saying that "we deplore" the moribund leader, and the final lines can't help but suggest that relief of a nation which can now relax, with no exorbitant victor to relax to:

... in the vast cathedral blood him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.

The terseness is funeral but it's also brisk, impatient, glad of an end. Tennyson's four-line epitaph for General Gordon is similarly parodic. Here a single lax word affords to make short notice of the national hero: the "warrior of God" must be friend, and tyrant's foe in the vast Soudan. "Somewhere" casually couldn't care less about the grave-digger to decree the future, bequeathing to his family the task of memorializing him. His son Hallam published the first biography in 1877, his grandson Charles produced another in 1948. It's clear that Sir Charles Tennyson, whose two essays in this volume, one by his own son Hallam and the other by Robert Bernard Martin, are devoted — felt the intimidation and inhibition of ancestry, which loomed on the poet Tennyson and which in different ways handicaps all poets. He expressed this in a simple, artlessly Cyprian image. Contrasting his own condition with the looming presence of his grandfather, he said that Tennyson "was a dominant height, who made every subsequent event in my life seem rather flat."

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The victim of inheritance

By Peter Conrad

classical epic, that man can defy himself by undertaking mighty tasks. Yet the poem includes a critique of this classical confidence. The after-life of heroic celebrity is qualified at once when Tennyson adds an epilogue referring to the death of Hallam. His friend's extinction, arbitrary and motiveless, cannot be justified, like that of Menoeceus, as a sacrifice.

The classical death disdains mere human life, certain if not of salvation then of an enduring fame which will atone for the discomfort of extermination. But the modern death is unwanted and fought against, and it opens on to a dubious nowhere. The classical poet can rejoice, like Pindar, in the enjoyments which await our hero. The modern poet, with no such assurance, is left behind trying to effect a resurrection of Hallam in verse. The contradiction between these two modes of death and of poetic obituary movingly confounds the poem. The "Pagan Paradise" which Tennyson has evoked is dispersed, and his own lyricism now sounds crass and insatiable, "like would-be guests", he says, "an hour too late". Redpath argues that it was at first Tennyson's intention to interpret Hallam's death sacrificially, by analogy with that of Menoeceus; he changed his mind, in Redpath's view, because "the whole idea verged on blasphemy". But the blasphemy is Tennyson's, and it's an offence against life, not against any god who might preside in "the unknown". Tennyson promises his son that he'll join a company of eugenic angels, "in height and powers more than human". Tennyson can offer no such consolation to Hallam or to himself. He hopes not for a splendid, swart, peerless exit but for a quiet surcease, a peaceful lapse into non-being. The classical death is vainglorious; the modern one expires, on an unanswered question. The bang and the whimper confront one another, and as they do, Tennyson both discards his own superlative imitation of Pindar and disowns the classicism to which he has officially been paying tribute.

For similar reasons, when attempting epic, Tennyson begins, as Redpath points out — at the end. Thus in "Morte d'Arthur" epic sublates into elegy. All Tennyson's poetry is elegiac, but in "Morte d'Arthur" the elegy itself suffers a death. Arthur, in his explanation of changes in the old order, resigns himself to his own obsolescence and death. His elegy for himself is an uncomplaining justification of history. But the poem doesn't end here: Arthur's reasoned elegy is generalized into the noise of walling which itself expires as it fades on the mare. The poem's own lyrical sound gives up the ghost and, in the last line, dies away. Elegy is altered too in Arthur's request that Bedivere should pray for him, because his image — "let thy voice / Rise like a fountain for me night and day" — suggests unassuaged mourning, not devout prayer. The fountain is lachrymose, and whereas prayer mounts from heaven to earth (Herbert called it thunder in reverse), a fountain only essays that ascent and then weeps its waters back to the ground.

Nor is this the only way in which "Morte d'Arthur" detaches itself from the past, revoking its epic and classical ambitions. In 1852 Tennyson added a derivative frame to it. This treated the truncated epic as a biographical relic, a "mystic fragment" "much better burnt". The poem itself is now, like Arthur, the victim of time, which has made it redundant. The poem's epic grandeur, its reverence for ancestral time, is overruled by the different, evolutionary time invoked by Eyre Hall. He consigns epic to extinction, because "nature brings not back the Mastodon". Poetry's plaintive regression is conquered by the relentless movement of biological and geological time ahead into the future.

John Bayley writes brilliantly of this self-disabling in his contribution to the *Studies*, which defends Tennyson from the imputation of decadence. He sees in Tennyson's apologies and equivocations the winking, nudging smiles of a "tacti humour". This furtive comedy permits Tennyson to crave the deception of lyricism while deprecating his own need for it. Arthur likewise manages to have it both ways when lyrically conjecturing about his own afterlife. He intimates to Bedivere that he's not at all sure whether he'll reach Avilion or even whether it exists:

I am going a long way
With these thou seest — if indeed I go —
(For all my mind is troubled with a doubt)

Having confessed his agnostic trepidations in advance, he then goes on to anticipate Avilion by lyrically conjuring it up. His snugly picturesque account of it as a seasonless temperate garden auburn or a sea-side haven for the retired hark, as John Bayley proposes in the case of the Sabbath morn from *The Two Voices*, "the exaltation which often goes with a 'goodly' Arthur" admits that he doesn't believe in the place, yet goes on to describe it anyway, making his own lyricism as no more than a trusting fiction.

For John Bayley, Tennyson's saving grace is a chuckling confidentiality, wearily but elegantly implying that the only way to make this boring life bearable is to write beautiful poetry about it. Tennyson knows himself to be addicted to a delusive lyricism, but by confessing his dependence — in asides like Arthur's to Bedivere — he cures himself of the enslavement. Glancing out of the artifice, he is thus the reverse of the decadent artist, who hides behind the decorative impersonality of his work. As John Bayley says, the decadent artist is convinced that the surface is impenetrable. In Tennyson the verbal surface is never this secure. Tennyson's most apparently innocent images can be aspeared — as they are when John Bayley begins to laugh, ingenuously and infectiously, at the word "loathed" in "Marianne", or at "unspeakable" in the poem to the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, or to make fun of the Lady of the Lake's underwater sword-factory — of being self-mockeries.

What Whitman called Tennyson's "finest verbalism" has a lassitude which, not believing in itself, seems to long for its own expiry. The impatience of lyricism with itself emerges in the description of Enoch Arden's island. Like every Tennysonian landscape, this one is a visual lament, an ocular elegy, describing what's not there:

The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The haze upon the land overhead
The haze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed them
Selves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise — but no
saw.

"It is magnificent, is it not?" asks W. W. Robson, without enquiring why it is so. It is magnificent for the odd but uniquely Tennysonian reason that it's dismayed by its own powers of observation. For the shipwrecked Enoch, all there is to do is observe, and the lines convey his fatigue in the recurrences of "blaze", which accumulate to make the glare intolerable, and in the circling back of "and again". The conclusion specifies the one drab object which, among all this exotica, is the most desired and which is therefore unattainable. Like the imprisoning double sestina of Sidney's shepherds in the *Arctura*, it is an instance of lyricism redoubling itself so as to match the lull and inertia of an enforced pastoral. Even more acutely, it criticizes the dreary routine of descriptions. Enoch is keeping watch, but is not interested in poetic observation or in the verbal transcription of landscape. These literary activities are rites for passing time, recourses of a bored poet and perhaps, eventually, of a stranded man, who has nothing else with which to occupy himself. Robson Crusoe dealt with the emptiness

by counting; Enoch Arden will do so by describing.

The words lavished on the landscape serve — as words in Tennyson often do — to fill a vacancy. Tennyson's habit of repetition isn't indulgence or superfluity but a desolating admission of incapacity. Repetition is threnodic, hawailing an absence, or performing over and over again a ritual of grief and loss. Examples abound: "To weep, and weep and weep / My whole soul out to thee" or: "anawer echoes, dying, dying, dying" or: "bury me, bury me / Deeper, ever so little deeper" or: "hollow, hollow, hollow all delight". In repeating the words, Tennyson is emptying them. He used to entrance himself by chanting his own name. Saying again and again the words which are the chance caption of your self is a tactic for voiding and cancelling out that self. While making nonsense of the words, you mystically make a nonentity of yourself. This achieves, internally, the same lyric evacuation Tennyson works externally on the landscapes, which are perceived by "dying ears" or "dying eyes" and discloses not so much what W. W. Robson calls a "largeness of vision" as an abstract devastation.

Two lines which sum up this obliteration are

There where the long street roars, hush
The silence of the central sea.

The great, incongruous word here is "central". That inappropriate adjective bravely clings to an urban sense of location (a Victorian and metropolitan convention of centrality, as in the naming of Grand Central Station, which is grand because it's central). Yet the rest of the image casts this spatial confidence adrift or submerges it, since the ocean is centreless, and its dominion — which Tennyson is here imagining — is an affront to the very idea of anthropocentricity. Even

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,

And murmur of innumerable bees
can sound, when compared with these other Tennysonian landscapes of devastation, disturbing. The shepherd in *The Princess* who utters these lines is persuading the maid to leave her mountain solitude and come down to the inhabited, second plains. But these final lines suddenly annihilate the landscape with which he's tempting her. Why she arrives — if she does — she'll find the landscape comfortably bare as her homeland. The elms are memorial to a dead time, the song of the doves is a moan. By the second of the lines there's nothing left but muted sound — not lyricism but the echo of it, like the demise of the lament at the end of "Morte d'Arthur".

The elegiac unmaking of pastoral accomplished here, or by Enoch Arden when he scans the landscape for what's not there, alters another inherited form in "Come not, when I am dead". Robson, in his essay, praises this as perfect, then adds that there's nothing the critic need say about it. I think there is something to be said about the way it inverts the *carpe diem* argument. It's another case of the literary past Tennyson inherits experienced by him as a living death. The *carpe diem* poems of the seventeenth century, by Donne, Marvell and Rochester, are impelled by a pornographic panic. The imminent expunging of the senses by death frightens the poet into valuing those instants — themselves small anticipations of death — when life is sexually at its most intense. Tennyson's character in "Come not, when I am dead" reasons differently. He would prefer to be bedded in the dust than with the voracious child who's filled him, in volunteering to die, he is also pronouncing the death of a poetic convention. He is "sick", he says, "of Time" — sick of it, and made sick by it; the morbid remnant of a tradition he buries along with himself.

The *Idylls of the King* also desert and belie the form to which they pay

humage. Tennyson wanted to write an epic; *Idylls of the King* is the substance is already present in "The Lotus Eaters" when, after the initial encouragement by Odysseus, the strenuous activism of epic mounds off into pastoral somnolence and lyric inertia. For the lotus eaters, the *Idylls* is a vacation from their epic duty. The *Idylls of the King* take an epic subject – the millennial politics of the Round Table – and show it foundering into a succession of flawed and contentious *idylls*, concerned not with public responsibility but with the anxieties of the private life: marital tribulation and domestic intrigue. John Bayley admires the "spacious official grandeur" of the *Idylls*, yet what's most remarkable about them is their enfeeblement of this solidity, in which they seem not to believe. The smiles betray this faltering of poetic faith. The epic simile supposedly fortifies character by associating the inert hero with the elemental wilfulness of nature. The repetition of epithets is a rehearsal of force. But Tennyson's repetitions, rather than expressing reassurance, confess a plangent helplessness. He says things over and over precisely because words are unavailing, and can't revivify the dead. The dedication of the *Idylls* to the dead Prince Albert exemplifies this mournful inability to rouse language from its despair:

I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears –
These *Idylls*.

The smiles don't invest the characters with power but deprive them of it. They also undermine the epic, disproving the earnest political and moral conscience of the Arthurians by dispensing their energy through a landscape which is vacant, spectral and prostrate. The "small violence" of Modred's resentment is already diminished by the adjective, which makes it the shadow of an epic fury like the wrath of Achilles – is was by transference to the landscape. As the simile puts it, his emotion now ruffles him like a wind irritating "On the bare coast." The violence, small to the epic, is further reduced by that superlative "little". Arthur, when he leaves Guinevere, liquefies and evaporates into a smile. He who was "The King" is reduced to the phantom of a Giant. Repetition carries on the process of insubstantialization by specifying that inside the mist he is "gray / And gray". At last he fades into a mere smile, the deceptive likeness of a solid thing, becoming "his mist / Before her". When Guinevere arises after him, another simile suspects her reach him directly but waves "as a stream that spouting from a cliff / Falls in mid air".

Smiles serve in Tennyson to undo and dematerialize the objects they were meant to strengthen. There's an equal perversity to his use of metre. Victorian poetry mechanizes metre. Its propulsiveness and recurrence makes the poetic line – in Browning's "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" or at the end of "Locksley Hall" – a linguistic railway, an unpausing engine. But for Tennyson this metrical inevitability suggests the operation of a fate, an automatism which can't be arrested. The charge of Tennyson's Light Brigade is motivated and sustained by the urgency and irresistibility of the poem's metre. The verbal form fits the doomed adventure; the metre is driven and peremptory; and the repetitions – as always in Tennyson – are imprisoning and disorienting, a disorientation of the brigadiers, leaving them no exit: Cannot to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon behind them.

The charge exiles Tennyson not because it's an incident of national valour but because it's a collective suicide. The brigadiers rush gratefully towards an extinction which other characters, like Oenone or Tithonus, passively solicit. Tennyson's lyricism converts death into a song, a last exhalation of breath like the dying swan's carol in "Morte d'Arthur", but the brigadiers experience together a death which isn't lyric but epic, because it has been mechanized and collectivized. Perhaps "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is the epic Tennyson didn't manage to write in *Idylls of the King*; it realizes, as Kipling did when he visited

Chicago and was thrilled by the abattoirs, with their railways and pulleys for the efficient slaughtering of multitudes of pigs – that, in the nineteenth century, an epic poem must sing the praises of a technology which has vowed itself to the extermination of nature.

Studies in Tennyson contains, however, a conscientiously argued reply to this notion of Tennyson's downward sense of time and of the morbidity which invades his poetic moods. This is Christopher Ricks's essay "Tennyson: Inventing the Earth". Ricks scoffs at what he sees as the psychotic melodrama of literary history which Harold Bloom has popularized, whereby influence becomes a clinical source of anxiety. Writing about poetic inheritance – Tennyson's borrowings from his poetic forebears and from his own juvenile self – Ricks discovers, in this acceptance of the past's bequest, an analogy to the workings of earthly time, by which Tennyson was haunted, Ricks refuses to see Tennyson's relation either to poetry's past or to the earth's prehistory as despairing. The self-plagiarism and allusion he traces in Tennyson's verse are, for Ricks, ecological economies. By recycling the past they assure the eternity of nature, which is enriched and perpetuated by our own individual deaths. Instead of considering poets – as Bloom does – to be engaged in a filial competition to unseat their fathers, Ricks describes them as brothers, toiling together, benignly apportioning a terrestrial wealth between themselves. Influence isn't a symptom of but of a comforting, fraternal solidarity. The past doesn't, in Ricks's view, reprove or inhibit. It contributes a richness which the present feeds on.

Thus Ricks's Tennyson is as cheerfully gaudy as the hero of his *Kent and Embarrassment*. "Growth may be thought of as digestive," he says, "and allusion may self-refer by speaking of eating and drinking." It's a beautifully humane interpretation, though it's compromised by Ricks's style. No wonder he is so fascinated by self-reference in Tennyson: his own writing is self-consciously self-referential and tends, like the cabalistic serpent, to devour itself. This is why his arguments so often rely on puns, generated by the overlapping of words and the involution of style. Nothing, for instance, an allusion to Marvell in *In Memoriam*, then linking it with Wordsworth's faith in the power of art to achieve death-defying marvels, Ricks comments that Tennyson, in contrast, "placed his modest hopes in the Marvell that had wrought it". Even while Ricks is deconstructing a view of literary history which sees it as parasitically self-involved, his style intimates the opposite. His most dazzling verbal effects are themselves small absurdist poems about the transmission of influence, and they wrap themselves round like a circularity from which there is no escape. He turns up a series of rhymes between "envision", "iron" and "Byron" which connect *Hudibras* for Tennyson this metrical inevitability suggests the operation of a fate, an automatism which can't be arrested. The charge of Tennyson's Light Brigade is motivated and sustained by the urgency and irresistibility of the poem's metre. The verbal form fits the doomed adventure; the metre is driven and peremptory; and the repetitions – as always in Tennyson – are imprisoning and disorienting, a disorientation of the brigadiers, leaving them no exit: Cannot to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon behind them.

The charge exiles Tennyson not because it's an incident of national valour but because it's a collective suicide. The brigadiers rush gratefully towards an extinction which other characters, like Oenone or Tithonus, passively solicit. Tennyson's lyricism converts death into a song, a last exhalation of breath like the dying swan's carol in "Morte d'Arthur", but the brigadiers experience together a death which isn't lyric but epic, because it has been mechanized and collectivized. Perhaps "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is the epic Tennyson didn't manage to write in *Idylls of the King*; it realizes, as Kipling did when he visited

A George Eliot Miscellany, edited by F. B. Pinor (180pp, Macmillan, £17.50, 0 333 29348 7). Contains a selection of items from George Eliot which are no longer readily available elsewhere. In addition, to extracts from reviews, essays and poems, the book contains two short stories, "The Lifted Veil" and "Brother Jacob". The editor provides notes and a commentary.

Epistolary evasions

By Lachlan Mackinnon

CECIL Y. LANG AND EDGAR F. SHANNON (Editors).
The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Volume 1, 1821-1850
366pp. Clarendon Press: University Press, £17.50.
0 19 812659 0

Tennyson gave little away in his letters. He would have hated the appearance of this volume, in which styles, the curt, the humorous, or the chatty, in evades us. At different times he plays at being bumbling, bewildered, or benevolent: unlike Kestis, he reveals next to nothing of his inner self by post.

The closest we can come to watching his creativity in action is in a letter to James Spedding written in early October 1834. Tennyson begins with a humorous apology for being late in writing – his characteristic opening move. Time and again he begins so, his friends having written to him begging for some reply (a pattern significantly broken only when proofs or publication are at issue). He tells Spedding "I have written several things since I last saw you", but that "you can scarcely expect me to write them out for you: for I can scarcely bring myself to write them out for myself and do you think I love you better than myself?" There is, typically, no revelation of poetic character, though there is an occasional pardonable air of playing the poet. A reference to Taylor's Preface to *Philip van Artevelde* (1834) leads him on to Byron and Shelley, whose "peculiar strength" did not yet give the world another heart and new pulses, and so we are kept going. Blessed be those that grease the wheels of the old world, inasmuch as to move on is better than to stand still.

Not great criticism, but nearer to it than Tennyson often comes here and, of course, dependent on a context of shared allusion. Unusually carried away by epistolary fervour, Tennyson proceeds, to contrast himself. "On second thoughts I write thee out a poem partly because Charles likes it, partly to give a local habitation to this paper and in your hobnobbing to what else flies loosely through the wind of my own memory like a Sibyl's leaf."

"Love thou thy land", he begins. Meet it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease;
We are all changed by slight degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

The thought is recognizably the same as that behind the earlier remark on Byron and Shelley. The mastery of the verse reveals the essential threadbareness of the prose – "grease the wheels" is a metaphor whose ostentatious handiness kills it beside the surreptitious "rust", which is almost carried past us by the stately procession of the verse. For Tennyson, verse is not a vessel in which thought is contained, but a medium in which thinking is done. His characteristic effects, both those of sound and those of metaphorical extension and interaction, are precisely those to which prose, particularly in this form, is most resistant.

This is not, though, the whole story. Tennyson's refusal to read his paper to the Apostles, and his subsequent resignation, may be seen as the first indicators of what was to become a lifelong aversion to prose, but the reasons for this lie as much in his nature as in differences of literary kind. The tentative, exploratory quality of his best poetry, its organic power of implication, are stylistic consequences deriving from a tentative character. For instance, Tennyson can easily be, and often is, treated as underserved. His prolonged virginity puzzles us as it should not: Tennyson simply could not give himself, in any sense, easily, as the long trail of lapsed friendships shows. He was enclosed within himself by a combination of arrogance and diffidence, of which those who knew him

were conscious, as we can see from their description of him and letters to him.

Given the paucity of material available under the title as strictly defined, the editors have sensibly decided to include as many letters and journal extracts by other Tennysons and the poet's friends and acquaintances as reasonably possible. Their decision will make this volume outstandingly useful to Tennysonians as a convenient compendium of sources. Other reviewers have noted the editors' wit, which is to be applauded as it nowhere interferes with the very weighty matter they have to present. Their annotation is scrupulous and extensive. Quotations, allusions and persons are wherever possible located and set in relation with one another, which is particularly useful when one comes to grapple with the large families of the period. Tennysons, Rawleys, Lushingtons, Massingbergs and many others are set out for us in exemplary detail. The only quibble one might have is the practice of annotating the first significant appearance, rather than simply the first appearance, of some characters, but the index states where names are to be found: it is sometimes puzzling.

Besides the wealth of scholarly information and period reference, incidental detail abounds: beef, cheps, bottles, pipes, bowls, hydropathy, worms (Septimus may have had them) and money – particularly money. A sense of the solid universe in which the poet moved is immensely valuable, especially when seen through the eyes of those with whom he shared it. This is sometimes funny, as on the occasion of Tennyson's visit to Dickens in Lausanne in 1846. Dickens wrote to Foster about it, saying that he had given his guests (Moxon) "accompanying him" "some fine Rhine wine, and cigars innumerable". No bet comment on Tennyson's greedy smoking habits can be found than his own letter to Fitzgerald about the same occasion, which speaks of some excellent biscuits "and a flask of liebfraumilch". The cigars vanished from Tennyson's mind as quickly as they were smoked.

A more important aspect, however, is the play that is made on our feelings. The book opens when Tennyson is twelve, and ends when he is a married man, Poet Laureate, and the author of *In Memoriam*. There is a perpetual dramatic irony to his worries and complaints, in that we know what is to become of him, and therefore also to the solitariness of his friends. In 1835, John Morre told Tennyson that "There are many more people that take an interest in you than you are aware of, and although he was referring directly to his own sister's admiration for the poetry, we can sense an undercurrent of personal concern which forces us involuntarily to participate in the affection he felt for the poet.

There is irony in letters to him, also, as in one from Matthew Allen early in the "pyrographic" scheme to mass-produce wood carvings for the poorer classes, a ramshackle business in which Tennyson was to lose all his money. Allen writes that "fear is gone" and that, were Tennyson to empathize with his shaky, lachrymose relief, "you would see the depth and sincerity of the heart of the man who calls himself your friend, and who trusts in God, that

he will be able to give the life to all those who were suspicious, but he be it from me to hasten, far be it from me to say a word against any one." The editors confess that "All the handwriting is unweasome, and the text of this letter may be in some extent made, not hegatten", but it rings true.

Richer still is the correspondence of Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt. At the time of the pyrographic scheme, Mary, Emily, Matilda and Cecilia Tennyson wrote to him to ask for their money. They were tan ("Will you be sorry that we have been, at what is it that you object to?") but a shade less than openly rude. He was not deceived, however, for he wrote nine days later to their mother saying emphatically that he had done as asked, "although 6 months is the usual notice" and that "I retain every proper kind feeling toward my nieces consistent with what is due to myself, but I cannot permit any one to write offensive letters to me." Both as a Gentleman and as a nation, he says, he is in high disgust. His pomposity and over-sensitiveness were, of course, the reflection of a deep vulnerability, and in these letters he achieves pathos in several occasions. For instance, he shows in a letter to his son his anxiety both as father and as social climber about the family's ability to use it. The most notable is a letter to his son George Hildevard Tennyson d'Eyncourt on September 1, 1835:

d'Eyncourt is spelt with a Y in all the old authorities. The Herald College have assessed that as the orthography. The Pronunciation is like Ei – not A or I net d'ancourt, or exactly d'ancourt but nearly that – Ei – as it sounds in Eight, is the pronunciation. We write it with a little d' as the name is d'Eyncourt. I may be able shortly to send you an account of the family and of our descent in both lines from the Lords d'Eyncourt. You will well imagine the main reason for the adoption of this name.

The vanity and anxiety lest George Hildevard get it wrong are so touchingly mixed that the last sentence cuts two ways: yes, he is dissociating himself from the name; Tennysons but yes, he is a very foolish man with no self-understanding.

Our knowledge of the characters in the Tennyson drama is considerably enhanced, then. The poet, however, remains finally elusive. This is partly due, of course, to the deprivations of his immediate successors. The destruction of his correspondence with Hallam seems irrevocably unnecessary, and Hallam Tennyson's editorial procedures generally do some disservice; but, as the new editors say, he made a great contribution as well, and he should not be too harshly judged, the less so as he knew that the aloofness that made Tennyson keep his wedding so secret was not only temperamental shyness, but a genuine hatred of being watched. Here, he is permitted his privacy, but that privacy can be seen as remarkable in its depth when set against the openness of his correspondents. He was not going to risk accidental self-revelation, and it is appropriate that this volume ends with a late discovery, a letter from Hallam to Moxon, his first love to his publisher: Tennyson is being taken care of, who was so well able to take care of himself.

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The Left out of step

By James Joll

F. L. CARSTEN:
War against War
German and Radical Movements in the First World War
285pp. Batsford, £12.50.
0 7134 36972

When the war broke out in 1914 the belligerent governments were relieved and surprised by the almost unanimous support they obtained. Nearly seventy years later we are still surprised at the extent to which that support lasted in spite of the length of the war, the hardships involved and the useless sacrifices which the strategy of the respective high commands demanded. F. L. Carsten's interesting, scholarly and quietly original new book reminds us, however, that in spite of the patriotic solidarity which the majority maintained throughout the war, there was both in England and Germany from the beginning a current of opposition to the war which grew in strength as the hardships and casualties increased, so that in Germany by the autumn of 1918 it was strong enough to have a brief period of apparent success and lank as if it might sweep away for good the military establishment and the militarist values which had been partly responsible for the war.

There have been a number of studies of the radical opposition in England and Germany in the First World War. In the case of Britain these include Keith Robbins's study of the pacifists, *The Abolition of War*, Marvin Schwartz's account of *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War* and some interesting chapters in David Marquand's *Ramsey MacDonald*. On the German side, the opposition to the war has usually been treated in the context of the development of the socialist parties, as in Susanne Miller's *Burgfrieden und Klassenkampf*, or of the history of the German Revolution and subsequent developments of the German Left, as in David Mervin's *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution*, while the relevant chapters of Peter Nettl's classic study of Rosa Luxemburg and Helmut Trautnow's recent biography of Karl Liebknecht are necessarily more limited in scope. Carsten has written the first book which analyses opposition to the war in Britain and Germany on a comparative basis. He has, by a careful and exhaustive study of the available archives, shown the nature and extent of the grass-roots opposition to the war and its relation to the organized political movements of the Left.

In an earlier book, *Revolution in Central Europe*, Carsten showed how much was still to be learnt about the actual nature of the German and Austrian revolutions from a thorough study of the sources and how many accepted interpretations crumble in the face of detailed evidence about what happened in reality rather than in legend. It is interesting and a little surprising that in applying similar methods to the wartime period Carsten discovered that far more archival material was available for Germany than for England. This is not because of the restrictions on the availability of some Home Office files or of what seem to be from Carsten's experience, the obscurity of the present holders of the ILP archives: it is rather because the actual structure of government in Germany meant that several authorities were simultaneously reporting on the state of public opinion and political dissent. Not only did the police, the military and the civilian administration each have their own channels, but each Land government was also compiling its own picture of the situation, so that Carsten has, in addition to the records of the various branches of the Imperial and Prussian governments, also used material from: Munich, Hanover, Karlsruhe, Wiesbaden and elsewhere. Bureaucratic proliferation, even if a hindrance to good government, is a help to the historian.

Such moments were gradually to accumulate following his posting to

as well as the focus of Carsten's own earlier work means that there is more detail in this book about Germany than about Britain, there is certainly enough in the chapters on England and Scotland – and Clydeside was a centre of radicalism in the First World War – to suggest more parallels between the two opposed societies than might have been expected. In both countries it was the shortages and restrictions at home rather than directly political motives or discontent at the front which gave the impetus to criticize the government and break the initial mood of national solidarity. In both countries it was the shop stewards who emerged in the factories rather than the official trade union leaders who took the lead in radical opposition. (Such opposition was not always what would now be regarded as progressive: much of the trouble on Clydeside arose from objections to the employment of women in industry so as to release men for the army.) Discontent seems to have been greater among civilians than among soldiers although it was the latter who presumably suffered most. There were complaints about shortages, the rise in the cost of living, "profiteering", a lack of beer – which in Sheffield and Derby caused the authorities some anxiety, since the pubs had to close on Saturday and their customers were exposed to pacifist oratory on the streets, "while in the public houses they are generally lectured by the war, there was both in England and Germany from the beginning a current of opposition to the war which grew in strength as the hardships and casualties increased, so that in Germany by the autumn of 1918 it was strong enough to have a brief period of apparent success and lank as if it might sweep away for good the military establishment and the militarist values which had been partly responsible for the war.

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After an unusual and highly eventful career, the author of these vivid memoirs, written in collaboration with the American historian, Frederick Starr, was appointed the first postwar German Ambassador to London, where he won wide popularity and renown as a leading architect of Anglo-German reconciliation. But few at that time knew what was going on to British, American and other friends in the Moscow diplomatic community, such as Fitzroy Maclean and "Chip" Bohlen. His account throws much interesting light on that murky period. It is still widely believed, for example, that Stalin favoured the pact with Nazi Germany merely as a means of gaining time. In von Herwarth's version, Stalin viewed Hitler with genuine admiration. In their total ruthlessness, after all, they were not dissimilar: Soviet Vozhd calling to Nazi Führer, as deep calls to deep; hence Stalin's obdurate refusal to believe in an impending Nazi attack.

When that attack did come, von Herwarth had already left the diplomatic service to join a cavalry regiment. It is reasonable to ask how a man of principle could square his conscience with such service – a question to which this account provides at least a partial answer:

Even if the weight of the sources

1917 and calling on it to follow the Russian example. For the most part, however, one is struck by the absence of disaffection in the armies, even though there were episodes like the revolt against the military police at Etaples in 1917 and other occasional protests carefully hushed up by the authorities. In Germany the only serious mutinies seem to have been in the navy; and with the high seas fleet confined to its bases, the unrest was more about conditions and inequalities between officers and men than about the continuation of the war.

For all the similarities between Britain and Germany to which Carsten draws our attention, there are big differences. In England, in spite of the nationalist fervour and the hounding of pacifists and disruption of their meetings or the well-known refusal of the seamen to allow Ramsey MacDonald to embark for the international socialist congress in Stockholm in 1917, considerable respect for civil liberties remained and agitators were not sent to prison for agitation against the war, as Karl Liebknecht was. The social climate was still such that MacDonald could dine with Lloyd George, while it would have been unthinkable for Hugo Haase to dine with Bethmann-Hollweg. Above all it was the fact that conscription was a new feature in Britain but had for decades been taken for granted in Germany that distinguished the two societies. The introduction of conscription united all opponents of the war in Britain and led them to fear that British society might become more like Germany as a result. "Let us see to it," an ILP pamphlet exhorted, "that while [millions of our sons and brothers] are gone forth to beat back Prussian militarism from our shores, we do not allow a kindred breed of militarism... to lay hold upon our country". It is a quotation which illustrates the essentially ambiguous attitude of the ILP: most of its members did not disapprove of the war as

as well as the focus of Carsten's own earlier work means that there is more detail in this book about Germany than about Britain, there is certainly enough in the chapters on England and Scotland – and Clydeside was a centre of radicalism in the First World War – to suggest more parallels between the two opposed societies than might have been expected. In both countries it was the shortages and restrictions at home rather than directly political motives or discontent at the front which gave the impetus to criticize the government and break the initial mood of national solidarity. In both countries it was the shop stewards who emerged in the factories rather than the official trade union leaders who took the lead in radical opposition. (Such opposition was not always what would now be regarded as progressive: much of the trouble on Clydeside arose from objections to the employment of women in industry so as to release men for the army.) Discontent seems to have been greater among civilians than among soldiers although it was the latter who presumably suffered most. There were complaints about shortages, the rise in the cost of living, "profiteering", a lack of beer – which in Sheffield and Derby caused the authorities some anxiety, since the pubs had to close on Saturday and their customers were exposed to pacifist oratory on the streets, "while in the public houses they are generally lectured by the war, there was both in England and Germany from the beginning a current of opposition to the war which grew in strength as the hardships and casualties increased, so that in Germany by the autumn of 1918 it was strong enough to have a brief period of apparent success and lank as if it might sweep away for good the military establishment and the militarist values which had been partly responsible for the war.

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such; they did not want to criticize those hundreds of thousands who had volunteered for the army; but they were wholly against conscription, and they maintained a continuous criticism of the foreign policy which had led in the war and a concern for the creation of a new international order when the war ended.

Carsten has concentrated on the organized opposition to the two governments which was linked to, even if not completely inspired by, the radical political parties, the ILP in England and the USPD in Germany. He discusses the role of individuals such as Bertrand Russell in so far as they relate to these movements but does not have much to say about the middle-class pacifists such as F. W. Foerster and Ludwig Quide in Germany, no doubt because they were not very influential: the German military authorities believed that a journey by Quide to attend a conference in Switzerland was "less dangerous than that of the most harmless member of the USPD".

The motives which led people to oppose the government in different degrees were complex and contradictory and the links between opposition to the war and support for revolution not as close as sometimes believed. In Britain any form of pacifism was unpopular and in Professor Carsten's words "the ILP and similar small parties experienced how difficult it was to swim against the current". They last more support than they gained by their opposition to the war. In Germany, although the success of the left appeared to be much greater, the strength of the radicals had been based on their eagerness to make an end to the war. It did not necessarily follow that the majority of the German working class were ready to make a revolution; and it is questionable whether, in spite of the collapse of October 1918, they were ever in a position to do so.

acteristic answer and a clever one, too, in that it went to the heart of the dilemma of those officers who opposed Hitler but remained loyal to their duty.

Von Herwarth took part in a number of engagements, but because of his Moscow experience, he became increasingly involved in the formation of volunteer units composed of former Soviet prisoners, particularly of the Caucasus and Crimea, who had initially welcomed the Germans as liberators. It was an enterprise which was completely at odds with the *Lebensraum* theories and brutal practices of people like Himmler and Rosenberg, but it prospered; by 1944, every seventh soldier serving in the German army was a former Soviet prisoner. Many, of course, had switched camps under duress. I remember interrogating Turkmen deserters on the Italian front and soon finding they looked on both their former Soviet and new Nazi masters with impartial loathing.

The most gripping part of von Herwarth's story concerns his gradual involvement with the German military and civil resistance to Hitler. There were a number of plots against the Führer's life, and, retrospectively, all were marked by a strange, but alluring amateurishness. One, for instance, involved the use of a British bomb (German bombs not being considered sufficiently reliable), and at one tense moment, it had to be dismantled and buried in a forest, where it was quickly unearthed by German secret police with tracker dogs. The boldest attempt was the one personally carried out, on July 20, 1944, by the gallant Count von Stauffenberg – an attempt for which he paid with his life. He was one of a number of senior German officers who were either executed or committed suicide after abortive attempts to overthrow Hitler. Johnnie von Herwarth only escaped sharing their fate by a hairs-breadth. The manner in which he did so forms an exhilarating coda to these memoirs.

Early in 1942, Hitler was told that the officers of our First Cavalry Division were a gang of old-fashioned anti-Nazis. He cynically replied that, as long as we were willing to die while performing our duties, he would postpone the question of our ultimate fate until the end of the war. It was a characteristic answer and a clever one, too, in that it went to the heart of the dilemma of those officers who opposed Hitler but remained loyal to their duty.

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commentary

A gun-metal garden

By Stephen Spender

The Prince of Homburg
Cottesloe Theatre

Heinrich von Kleist, of ancient military Prussian stock, joined the First Foot Guards at Potsdam when young, left after six years and lived a life of restless studying, intermittent earning, editing and writing stories, essays, plays and poems. Everything failed and in 1811 he shot himself together with a girl who was dying of cancer. Like so many other German Romantic poets, his career seems to belong to the dark side of Goethe's sunlit harvest. His writings continue to haunt and trouble us. They have some mysterious affinity with the works of Franz Kafka in our century.

The young Prince of Homburg, hero of this play, is perhaps not so much the portrait of a Romantic dreamer as the persona of the poet imprisoned in his world of the Prussian aristocratic military hierarchy, rather like — though quite opposite to — Prufrock, with his vision of the mermaids, trapped in the world of Bostonian drawing-rooms.

In the opening scene the Prince is in a Paradise of the imagination. Half-awake, reclining on a bench under a tree, he holds a garland of laurel leaves which he places on his brow. Victory and love are the intertwined elements of his age of innocence.

He is interrupted by a torch-bearing search-party consisting of his commander, the Elector of Brandenburg, and the Electress, Princess Natalie, the Princess's cousin. Here he is — dreaming — when he ought to be at the head of his cavalry, with which for the three previous days he has been in pursuit of the fleeing Swedish army. But instead of reproaching him, the Elector acts in a way symbolic of his dream. He takes the garland from the Prince's brow, winds a gold chain from his own neck round it and hands the garland to the Princess Natalie. The Prince looks up, murmurs "Natalie, my maiden and my bride," then, turning to the Elector, "Frederick, my lord and father," and then, to the Electress, "My gracious mother."

This opening scene stands apart, a microcosm of all the elements of the action, and also a prophetic vision which also takes place in the final scene but with what is perhaps a farcical irony, when the Prince of Homburg is indeed hailed as victor — and crowned with the laurel garland by the Elector who blesses his union with Natalie.

But between these two scenes is the sequence of events which forms the narrative of the play, in a second scene, the Prince, still in a trance, scarcely pays heed to the orders given for the next day's battle. And when the battle does take place, still a sleep-walker, he orders and leads the cavalry charge which makes him victor of the Fehrbellin. But in doing so he has acted counter to the orders given by the Elector on the eve of the battle, that he should on no account attack unless he receives specific instructions to do so. He is court-martialled and sentenced to death. He sees his grave being dug and, in effect terror and a state of complete demoralization — like Claudio pleading with Isabella — begs the Electress to intercede with her husband to save his skin. In answer, the Elector writes him a note stating that if the Prince has cause to think the sentence unjust he has only to write back and say so, and he will at once be reprieved. Reading this, the Prince realizes the force of the justice of the state and he becomes — opposing a threatened revolt of the Army on his behalf — the advocate of his own execution. There follows the final scene in which he is forgiven.

and his dream of the first scene comes true.

It seems to me essential that in a production the absolute contrast between the beginning and ending scenes in the garden and the intervening action be established as strongly as possible. Unfortunately in John Burgess's production this does not happen. Everything, from first to last, takes place against a gun-metal skycloth. There is not a tree or a green patch in the garden. Prussian officers in uniforms and aristocratic Prussian ladies dressed in monochrome Oranien costumes move across the stage among hills of fumigating, declaiming rather than speaking their lines, like a procession of figures on a neo-classical *unter den Linden* frieze. This two-dimensional production, by reducing it to a progression of military events, submerges the real theme of the play, the contrast between the truth which is vision and the dream that comes true as terrible reality.

In the central scene when the Prince looks into his grave, he sees death as a utter annihilation, not as heroic dream-fulfillment. It is the negation of the dream. The awakening from the dream to the reality brings the bitter taste of gun-powder and conformism with the Prussian military hierarchy. At the end, when the Elector removes the bandage from the condemned Prince's eyes and says "Let the cannon's roar waken him," he awakes indeed — to comrades shouting "Long live the Prince of Homburg!" and who go on to yell "to the field" and "into battle" and "stamp in the dust the enemies of Brandenburg!" The difference between the innocent beginning and the jubilant bloodthirsting end of the play is like that between the theme of one of Blake's *Joyous Songs of Innocence* and the same theme echoed in the dust and ashes of the *Songs of Experience*.

Patrick Drury as the Prince of Homburg holds up his profile like a gold Napoleon and speaks his lines clearly, but the style of production gives him little opportunity for exhibiting any symptoms of having an inner life. Robert Urquhart as the Elector gives what is probably the best performance here of an authoritarian who is capable of feeling and imagination. Nicholas Selby is good as Kottwitz the general who has a kind of Wordsworthian natural play. Lindsay Duncan looks well in the part of Natalie and shows embarrassed pity for the Prince in his object scene of terror and self-pity.

The version of Kleist by John James has the merit that, like the production, it puts across clearly and strongly the essential of the action. However, it fails to convey either the powerful rhythmic unity of Kleist or his hard, severe, clean-cut imagery. The *Prince of Homburg* is written in iambic pentameters, which are certainly difficult to translate from German; poetry into English without their sounding like had English blank verse. All the same an English-style has somehow to be invented which has, or which suggests, a rhythm strong and assured as a movement *alla march* in a Beethoven or Schubert symphony. Consider the opening lines, spoken by Hohenzollern:

Der Prinz von Homburg, unser tapfster Vetter,
Der an der Rouler Spitze, sich drei Tagen
Den flüchtigen Schweden mutter nach-
geseht,
Und sich erst heute wieder stemmt
Im Hauptquartier zu Fehrbellin gezeigt.
In the prompt version with which the theatre provided me, John James makes of this:

after the last three days,
In pursuit of the retreating Swedish forces
at the head of your cavalry the
Prince of Homburg our audacious
cousin.

reappeared at headquarters here at Fehrbellin only today quite out of breath

This is accurate, but it has neither rhythm nor style, it is neither prose nor verse.

As well as a clanging, almost iron, rhythm, there is literalness of imagery and metaphor in Kleist, admittedly very difficult to put into English but this kind of thing, by Mr James, seems fluffed and blurred at the edges:

now goddess of th' illustrious sphere
with aure drifting
off your crest
a lifting sail
in a tenuous breath
that touches my hair
as down to me here
you do revolve
where the German runs:

Nuo denn, auf deiner Kugel, Un-
geheures
Du, der der Windeshauch des Schieler
heut,
Gleieh einem Segel läufst, roll heran!
Du hast mir, Glück, die Locken schon
gestreift.

Perhaps impossible to translate, but surely what should be conveyed is the feeling that behind Kleist's verbal imagery there is an almost machine-like articulated model, as in English metaphysical poetry. An English version of Kleist requires a consistent and unified style, authoritative imagery and magnificent rhythm. Perhaps this is too much to ask, but the weakness of the Cottesloe production is probably to be traced mostly to the English text.

Dream children

By Harold Hobson

Francis Kilvert
Lyttelton Theatre

To his platform performance of *Francis Kilvert* Timothy Davies challenges all the subtle "Victorian" and no doubt somewhere the ghost of Lewis Carroll gratefully applauds. For though no overt word is said on the subject Davies, under the direction of Giles Block, makes it quite clear that in his mind, the Victorian was an age of innocence and not of hypocrisy, and that our own, far from being an age of carefree permissiveness, is one of guilt.

Davies, a tall, imposing presence in a Victorian cutaway coat, wearing a bushy black beard, does not, so far as I can tell, utter anything that is not freely set down without reticence in William Plomer's edition of the *Diary of the Rev Francis Kilvert*. Kilvert was born in 1840 and educated at Oxford, where there is a slight chance that he knew Lewis Carroll, one of whose tastes (not that for mathematics) he most undoubtedly shared. He became a curate in Wales and fell in love with a charming girl of nineteen, whose father refused his request for an engagement on the ground that his prospects were unsatisfactory. Kilvert married another lady in 1878, and died five weeks later of peritonitis.

The sadness of his life (which otherwise was filled with joy that borders upon ecstasy) is not so much that he was never allowed, as a gentleman, to show any sign of love to the enchanting and, I might say, Daisy, but that this being so, he never had a child in the culminating moment of a performance it would not be wrong to describe as purifying. Mr Davies titters a cry of anguish for the daughter who will never be borne to him, which in its abandonment in passionate regret is as moving as the ending of Lamb's essay on "Dream Children" when Elia says that "the children of Alcega's Barrow father," and that his



"Quarter", a previously unpublished etching from David Hockney's *Cavalry Suite* of 1966, in the exhibition *Hockney and Poetry* at Michael Parkin Fine Art Ltd, 11 Motcomb St, London SW1, until June 12.

own must wait on the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before they have existence and a name.

This was the abiding sorrow of Kilvert's life, though it is never mentioned except in Davies's single piercing cry, and in the solemn look of grief which follows it. But in spite of it Kilvert had many consolations. He had a capacity for rejoicing in, and describing, the beauties of landscape, and Mr Davies beautifully communicates Kilvert's simple, even religious, sense of wonder at the loveliness of hills and meadows. He found satisfaction in visiting his parishioners, even if they were old and shrunken and mad. The sight of a pretty girl left behind on a station platform as his train swept by gave him a deep pleasure. Mr Davies rocks with a marvellous internal laughter as Kilvert recalls some story told him by clerical friends of which he alone can perceive the transcendent humour; he conveys a feeling of quiet joy at summer tea-parties on lawns smoothly shaven. What shocks us, of course, is his delight in looking at the bottoms of naked little girls.

Today the name of Lewis Carroll, once so renowned for his friendship with young girls, is surrounded with uncomfortable suspicions. He, like Kilvert, was fond of looking at naked female children; he even went so far as to ask their mothers if he could photograph them so. Kilvert does not go as far as this, for he does not seem to have been a photographer. But he describes the rounded beauties of the curves in the naked bodies of young girls with the same rhapsodic joy that he reveals in his happiness at a splendid sunset. He makes no secret of this particular pleasure; he shows it openly to the children's parents, and they seem to have taken it as the manifestation of a perfectly normal feeling.

Everything depends, of course, on the actor's interpretation of this aspect of Kilvert's nature. Our age thinks itself permissive; nevertheless, it considers Carroll to have been subject to a perversion. It may defend the perversion, but the defence is proof of a feeling of guilt, as the stage exists. Mr Davies does not

take this attitude; his performance is a model of rectitude and complete innocence. Not once does he allow the thought of abnormality or sin to enter our minds; he presents us with a portrait of absolute purity. By the side of his picture of the Victorian age, ours seems prurient, frightened, filthy.

These platform performances at the National Theatre contain some of the finest and most original work now being done on the British stage. This work remains unknown to the vast majority of theatregoers because it gets little publicity, which is explicable by the fact that many productions get only one or two performances, though often they are revived later. Thus the work of exceptionally young players all too often gets but a poor reward. Admirers of the National would greatly enrich their experience if they made a regular habit of visiting these (cheap) performances. Occasionally there would be disappointments; but many times there would be a brilliant surprise.

GOD COMANY
DOUGLAS HARPER

Douglas Harper, sociologist, photographer, and Carl long-time tramp, were companions on an extraordinary journey across America into the world of tramps, migration, skid row and hobo jungles and hard work. He was a violent world where fierce individualism and freedom are still possible. It is a world that will soon disappear. Carl educates us by explaining how to get by on the road, telling hobo stories, and sharing his own experiences, and you serious sociological Harper's own evocative

The University Press
126 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SD

Twitching townie

By William Boyd

The Grass Is Singing
Odeon, Kensington High Street

The Grass Is Singing was Doris Lessing's first novel and was published in 1949. Director Michael Ruseburn, in his first full-length film, has been remarkably faithful to the book, apart from two relatively unimportant deviations. First, he has updated the setting to 1960, and second, the Rhodesian background has been replaced by one that appears superficially South African. Neither alteration is very significant for, although the book concerns a relationship between a white woman and a black servant, the broader socio-political analogies don't shout for attention. The emphasis of the drama is essentially a private and personal one, largely remote — both physically and psychologically — from the collective madness of apartheid.

Karen Black plays the central character, Mary, a rather prim secretary no longer in the first flush of youth, who in a moment of quiet desperation, rushes into marriage with a tsetse farmer, Dick Turner (John Thaw). Turner's marriage farm is miles out in the bush. He lives in primitive bachelor squalor and doggedly persists in outdated farming methods, sure one day that his luck will turn and his steadily accumulating debts will be no more.

Only briefly daunted, Mary sets to work and transforms the interior of the farmhouse into something domestic and more acceptable. However, the day-to-day quality of her life can't be improved quite so easily. She's a "townie" — in her husband's term — and she unthinkingly imports her townie notions of propriety into the sequestered household. The victims of this new regime are the black cooks and houseboys, whom she swiftly alienates and then sacks.

Slowly the poverty and ramshackle nature of her married life begin to get her down. In a moment of despair she runs away, but finds it impossible to resume her old life in the town. The first signs of mental imbalance make themselves manifest — played to the distracted flinching of Karen Black. Numb and disoriented she accompanies the patient Turner back to the town. She, though, continues to deal up its for native workers which they regard as a degradation to patronize. Turner falls ill with malaria and she has to take over the running of the farm, in which capacity her intransigence and thoughtless discipline quickly lose her the loyalty of the work-force.

With her husband bed-ridden and helpless she comes more and more to

rely on the latest in her succession of houseboys, Moses (John Kani), with whom she strikes up a curious and intimate relationship. It has its sexual undertones, but these remain always implicit. As Mary cracks under the strain and slides into madness under the appalling pressures of her life, Moses becomes a guardian and support — he brushes her hair, even dresses her — a situation that is deeply offensive to her white neighbours.

The relationship is not merely one-sided. For Moses it comes with its full share of trust and reciprocity; to such an extent, indeed, that he sees Mary's final departure (for some kind of hospital one assumes: she's almost completely deranged) as an act of betrayal and kills her.

In the novel the unusual relationship between Mary and Moses is subtly and credibly conveyed. But without the crucial benefit of this knowledge the final half of the film seems increasingly incomprehensible. This is largely due to Ruseburn's overzealous respect for the novel, which is treated as unvoiced reflection or omniscient comment in the book is left unspoken in the film. As is so often proved when fiction is directly recast in another medium, a respectful adaptation can often do a disservice to the original. By declining to write additional explanatory dialogue the actors have to rely on increasingly desperate mute expressions and the burden of interpretation left on the viewer becomes impossibly heavy, a constant racking of one's brain in an effort to divine the significance of every twitching facial contour or soulful gaze. The day-to-day quality of her life can't be improved quite so easily. She's a "townie" — in her husband's term — and she unthinkingly imports her townie notions of propriety into the sequestered household. The victims of this new regime are the black cooks and houseboys, whom she swiftly alienates and then sacks.

Otherwise Ruseburn has made a respectable directorial debut. He is well served by magnificent Zambian scenery and strong performances from John Thaw and John Kani. Karen Black's role, however, is more problematic. It appears, in essence, a piece of miscasting. She manages the accent surprisingly well, but seems quite wrong for the part. As she goes mad, so her performance leans dangerously close to self-parody or even high camp, and, unfortunately, images of her playing a demented stewardess in one of the *Airport* films ("I can fly this plane alone!") kept edging themselves persistently into my head.

Excellent browsing and sluicing

By Eric Korn

A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse
Lyttelton Theatre Foyer

"O INCOMPARABLE JEEVES", "LEF E UNICO, JEEVES", "SU-PERDUPER, JEEVES", "UTIMBER-KET", "JEEVES", "UPP MED HAKAN, JEEVES", they thunder, while the Master confides to a friend in gratified bemusement: "I can't imagine why these Swedes like my stuff, but apparently they are never happier than when curled up, with it."

If your happiness is similarly achieved, you can do no better than shimmer along to the South Bank; in the foyer of the Lyttelton Theatre you will find a small but entertaining display, made possible by Amoco, called "A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse". It continues until May 22. In addition to a cornucopia of the works in all languages living, the dead (if "Grattias ago tibi Jeeves"

Artisan as artist

By J. B. Donne

Festival of India
Commonwealth Institute

Survival, revival or death are no longer options open to traditional arts and crafts of the world, but their three possible destinies. In the West, death has supervened; articles created by "craftspeople" are usually too expensive or too useless to count as genuine craft products, while they seldom achieve the qualities demanded of works of art. In Eastern Europe and other socialist countries where governments are reviving their "national cultures", crafts have become divorced from the peoples they are supposed to represent and are directed towards the exotic requirements of tourists and the export market, in which foreign currency has the upper hand over cultural propaganda.

Only in those developing countries whose rural areas remain most underdeveloped do the traditional arts and crafts survive in a state of authenticity. In India, political and social changes have brought about the downfall of the extravagant rulers and landlords whose patronage supported a luxury art of court regalia and lavish oriental *haute couture* which has now disappeared forever. But these changes have not life remains at an economic nadir. As Asok Mitra so clearly points out in the catalogue to the recent exhibition, *The Arts of Bengal and Eastern India*, at the Commonwealth Institute (£2, 104pp), the qualities of function, economy and honesty of treatment are of no importance to the serendipitous collector or the overseas buyer. It is pathetic to see the technical skills that have been handed down over generations being squandered to satisfy a foreign or even local urban market for articles that will be displayed as folk art or curios and never put to practical use. As a result, many village artisans, unable to conceive any purpose for such work beyond their own personal gain, often produce designs without meaning and forms without life.

On the other hand, weaving and pottery, essential handicrafts in the lives of the majority of Indians to-day, are thriving. On display, and for sale, was a wide range of Indian and Western costumes. Presumably the size and inconvenience of vertical looms and pit-looms precluded any demonstration of Indian weaving. But this was redeemed by the rarer spectacle of a block-printer at work. The wood-blocks themselves are

works of art, the craftsmanship with which the intricate designs are carved far exceeding that displayed in the copying of ritual masks or plaques showing mythological figures for the tourist trade.

However, it is traditional styles and designs that ultimately appeal to Westerners, however much they may differ from Western concepts, rather than those most influenced by Western ideas. The former show India through Indian eyes; the latter are an attempt on the part of the Indian designer to see India through European eyes, and are thereby doomed to failure. Indeed, self-assurance of the traditional craftsman is often undermined by the ambivalence of the modern designer. Again, as Asok Mitra says:

All that we can now do is to master the traditional techniques and employ individual talent for the proper understanding of the tradition and its transformation or adaptation to the functions of modern life and its domestic components. Only then can certain conventions grow hostily; only then can we get away from the pursuit of superficial Indianness.

One example of this being achieved was to be seen in the performance of the young, beautiful and technically superb dancer of Bharata Natyam, Alamel Valli. This is the oldest form of Indian classical dance and the tradition is believed to go back to Vedic times. In the second century AD it was codified by Bharata Muni in the *Natya Sastra*, which laid down rules for the various facial expressions, hand gestures and movements of the body, including the neck, eyes and eyebrows. Originally the style of temple dancing of Southern India performed by the *devadasis*, who were dedicated to temple service from childhood, it had degenerated by the end of the last century to a stage spectacle, often performed for the amusement of Europeans. It has since been revived in a form thought to approximate the classical tradition, which demands years of training in music and song as well as the dance itself. But this has been achieved only at the cost of considerable secularization. It is one of the great strengths of Alamel Valli that she is able to remind one that Bharata Natyam is not merely a form of entertainment but an act of worship.

Further events in the Commonwealth Institute's programme include plays, seminars and a book exhibition, and a workshop provided by the Academy of Indian Dance. They offer a wide-ranging survey of the state of cultural life in India today.

New Oxford books:
History

The Escape from Elba

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The history of the Knights Templar has long been overshadowed by the cloudy circumstances in which the Order ended. This book seeks to describe the medieval Templar and their trial fairly and impartially, and to analyse the strange beliefs that have grown up about them — about their wealth, their supposed hidden knowledge, their occult powers — in modern times. Illustrated £12.95 20 May

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'Admirably judicious survey of the major themes in medieval English urban history', *an excellent work of highly imaginative and reliable synthesis*. *History*. First published in 1977, this book is now available in a paperback edition. £5.95 20 May

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Edited by Marjorie Chibnall

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Lloyds Bank 1918-1969

J.R. Winton

This book sets out the history of Lloyds Bank from 1918 to 1969, when Sir Eric Faulkner succeeded Sir Harold Peakes as chairman. It is a sequel to *Prologue: Sayer's Lloyds Bank in the History of English Banking*, published in 1957 and now out of print, which recorded the story from the establishment of the bank in 1785 up to the end of the First World War. £16 27 May

Oxford University Press

Behind the lines

"I can't stand bloody Lodge, and I can't stand bloody Drabble."

"Then what are you doing here? They're the only people appearing tonight."

"Oh, I only come for the drinks." This authentic piece of dialogue from the Lancaster Literature Festival has the added piquancy of being an exchange between an anonymous festival-goer and David Lodge himself, as they stood side by side in the gents before Lodge gave his public reading. Literary Festivals are supposed to be all about opportunities for encounters between writers and readers, but the opportunities for extending the bar licence seem an equal incentive.

The Literary Festival season is well under way. "Writing '82" at Lancaster and the Oxford Poetry Festival are behind us; the exiguous Cley Little Festival of Poetry concludes this weekend. Oxford provided an opportunity for a meeting of the newly-formed Literature Festivals Council. Originally, this was to consist of ten Festivals, but although it advertises itself in the Arts Council's catalogue, *Festivals in Great Britain*, as "the world's most comprehensive arts festival", the Edinburgh International Festival rather embarrassingly had to drop out, since there is no literary content in the official programme this year. Instead, there is a conference on state patronage of the arts; next year they promise a book fair.

The surviving members of the Literature Festivals Council are, besides Oxford and Lancaster: Ilkley

(July), St Ives (September), Cheltenham (October), Newcastle (October), Kent (October), Essex (October) and the Cambridge Poetry Festival in April 1983. The formation of the Council is a sign of the increasing professionalization of literary festivals - and the need to co-ordinate their activities. Is it a good idea to have four of them in the same month?

The Council has been brought together through the good offices of the Director of the Poetry Society's National Poetry Secretariat, Pamela Clunies-Ross. The Poetry Secretariat subsidizes many of the appearances by poets at Festivals, and it was plain that some means of communication between the promoters was necessary. So now she organizes the Literature Festivals Council as well.

But do Literary Festivals do anyone any good? Pamela Clunies-Ross is convinced that they are worth while, primarily because of the contact between writer and reader. (Presumably these are normally at a higher level than that experienced by David Lodge.) Seeing authors in the flesh makes "writing, and therefore books, seem part of normal human activity." Writers do not make much money from their participation, although Ilkley is reported to have paid as much as £500 for a star turn. But they do enjoy meeting each other, and an appearance has a healthy effect on book sales.

Or at least it would do, if only publishers were more enthusiastic, and more efficient, about getting their authors' books on display. This

is one of the problems the Literature Festivals Council hopes to overcome. Other concerns are the proper publicizing and marketing of Festivals - in other words getting people as well as poets to turn up. (This seemed to be a difficulty at Lancaster.) It is also hoped to do something to stimulate commercial sponsorship, which is patchy, and local at best.

The quest for a commercial sponsor lies at the heart of a plot for a new Literary Festival whose scope and budget overshadows all others. Proposals are now circulating for a London Literary Festival costing £2 million over five years.

The project is the brain-child of Desmond Clarke, Director of the Publishers' Association's Book Marketing Council. His scheme outlines a book week featuring "a minimum of fifteen highly publicized, highly attractive events a day", from Byron at the Barbican to cookery books in the kitchens of the Dorchester. (Some of the people named in the proposals might be surprised to know what they are listed as doing. The Institute of Contemporary Arts was astonished to learn that it would be hosting a Festival Forum.)

Desmond Clarke states that "no one has ever had the public acclaim of other contributors to the arts", and this effort to establish not just a national, but an international Literary Festival in London must be welcomed. But there remains the matter of the £2 million. Some of

this is expected to come from ticket sales, the sale of television and radio rights worldwide, "and other forms of franchising." The Arts Council, the British Council and all their friends and relations will be approached. The major sponsor, however, will have to be a very generous international company, ideally one with interests in communications.

Clarke names no names, but he says that a number of companies have expressed interest. If these talks are successful, then a Festival Trust will be set up. (I note that no writers are on the informal committee currently at work.) The first Festival will be held at Easter 1984 or 1985. In the meantime, the BBC has become so enthused with the idea that it is holding its own Literary Festival of the Air this October.

Further afield, though closer in time and reality, is "Britain Salutes New York", a British Arts Festival to be held in New York in the Spring and Summer of 1983. The British American Arts Association has its sponsors and performers all lined up - until it comes to literature. The organizers do not seem to have taken Desmond Clarke's view that English Literature is "arguably the largest and most glorious artistic contribution ever made to civilization."

So far, the literary element in what Sir Hugh Casson calls "the most ambitious celebration of British arts, culture and life ever held outside the UK" is only a vague plan for

"a British novelist, a British dramatist, and a British poet" to appear at the Poetry Center, at the Young Men's Hebrew Association on 92nd Street. These single representatives of fiction, drama and poetry, who have not yet been decided upon, are being dealt with under "fringe events".

The organizers recognize that literature is one of the gaps in their programme, whereas Mobil Oil is presenting the Queen's Holbein Collection at the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the National Westminster Bank is backing the Monteverdi Choir. Since the Poetry Center can, and does, attract audiences of 2,000, would some of those printing and publishing companies that have been armchairing such good business recently consider sponsoring Lodge or Orrible?

The Literature Advisory Panel of the Arts Council has decided to withdraw its support for three literary prizes awarded by the Crime Writers' Association. This year the Arts Council gave £2,550 to "top up" the Golden Dagger awards for fiction and non-fiction, and the John Creasey first novel award. The reason apparently is that the panel does not consider detective stories to be literature as the panel chooses to define it. In the light of the known fondness for the genre of the panel's chairman, Margherita Laski, the Crime Writers are mystified.

Robert Hewison

Fifty years on . . .

The TLS of May 12, 1932, carried the following review by D. L. Murray of Bath by Edith Sitwell:

One ought not perhaps to linger too long over the picture-cover of a book; but the very agreeable drawing that adorns Miss Sitwell's essay on eighteenth-century Bath, displaying a fanciful portrait of the author as a Muse or goddess seated upon plump clouds above the city spires with Berninque cherubs fluttering around, provokes reflection. And when the book has been read we are tempted to turn again to the cover and ask that it is both a description and criticism.

For the cover is unashamedly baroque and the book is baroque too. It reminds us a little of those sumptuous stage productions now in fashion in which we are apt to lose sight of the outlines of the drama in a shifting whirl of magnificent pageantry and sometimes feel confused about the exact historical period through which we are supposed to be moving. Not that we charge Miss Sitwell with chronological inexactitude; she lets us have perfectly fair warning that is summing up ghosts to tread the stones of Bath for her masque she is not going to be tied down to an exact date - "What does it matter in two hundred years if the clock has struck 1709 or 1759?" It does not matter at all; but what does perturb us is the question whether we have here the spirit of the real Bath of Beau Nash. The temptation to romanticize the city of beautiful streets and beautiful clothes is, no doubt, strong. The greater interpreters certainly did not yield to it; the Bath of Sheridan or Jane Austen, of Pickwick is gay or absurd, but not romantic.

The fact is that Bath is recalcitrant to the effusiveness of a romantic or a baroque handling. The cool classicality of its squares and parades rebukes us, Miss Sitwell is apt to ignore the positiveness and rationality of her period. Her extraordinary remark that the Established Church in the first half of the eighteenth century was a "woolly flock" with "leaders who had no more intellect than their followers" betrays this badly. As if the Church of Butler, Warburton, Sherlock, Hoadly, Law were not in danger of breaking down chiefly through excess of intellect over emotion. And it required the status of Lady Huntingdon to make anything like Methodism tolerable at Bath. Its tradition was not in favour of "enthusiasm" religious or poetical. Beckford was no doubt about to flap his first bat of the eighteenth century, but the genius loci was peremptory, with the shadow, as it were, of a certain white three-cornered hat that used to make stiff daggers and booted captains and romantic misses all alike quake and come to heel. Beckford might effort Landseverian crescent with a gimcrack tower; but he wrote his wildest fictions in Augustan prose. You could not be extravagant at Bath, except in the humdrum gaudy sense and even in that given baize field Beau Nash, though dabbling deeply in the tripod, deprecatory sensational ruins and suicides.

Nash was the great killjoy of Bath. He waged sententious warfare on ring-bops, spurs, swords, dials, late hours, crooked lanes, saucy artists who branched their chair-poles in the wigs of the quality, John Wesley, and his sermons - in fact the whole paraphernalia of the romantic eighteenth century.

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The Bodley Head, 9 Bow Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7AL or Transworld Publishers Ltd., Century House, 61-63 Uxbridge Road, Ealing W6 6SA.

Among this week's contributors

JOHN C. ALBERSON is Chief Constable of Oveon and Camwall. He is the author of *Policing Freedom*, 1979.

WILLIAM BEYD's novel *A Good Man in Africa*, 1981, has recently been released by Penguin.

W. R. BUCK is a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge and the author of *The Evolution of American Democracy*, 1970.

HENRY CHADWICK is Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge.

OWEN CHADWICK's most recent book is *The Popes and European Revolution*, 1981.

PETER CONRAD's books include *The Victorian Treasure House*, 1973.

B. F. COOK is Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum.

NEIL CONCORAN is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. His study of David Jones, *The Song of Deeds*, will be published later this year.

ANTHONY ORLIUS's most recent book is the South African historical novel *Border*.

ERIC OR MAUNY was BBC correspondent in Moscow from 1963 to 1966 and from 1972 to 1974.

K. H. O. HALEY, is Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield.

ROBERT HEWISON's *Irreverence, Scurrilous, Profanity, Vilification and Licentious Abuse: Meny Python, the Case Against* was published in 1981.

HAAROLD HOBSON is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

ANTHONY HOLDS is the author of *The St Albans Pottery: The Life and Crimes of Graham Young*, 1975.

J. L. HOUDELO is a lecturer in New Testament Studies at King's College, London.

OLWEN HUTTON is the author of *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789*, 1975.

O. L. HUXLEY is Secretary for Pelite Literature and Antiquities of the Royal Irish Academy and President-elect of the 1984 International Congress of Classical Studies.

JAMES JELL's books include *Gramsci*, 1977.

JAMES KIRKUP's *Derogatory Messages* was published this year.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

ADAM MARS-JONES's collection of stories *London Lectures* was published last year.

Author, Author

Competition No 70. Readers are invited to identify the authors of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 4. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ. The solution and results will appear on June 11.

1 When tobacco came, when Raleigh did first bring the unbleached hemp, the plant of peace, the known king. Of comfort brings, then indeed new hope. Came to the host of poets.

2 I could say what I know of the virtue of it, for the expulsion of rheums, raw humours, crudities, obstructions, with a thousand of this kind; but I profess myself no quack-salver. Only thus much; by Hercules, I do hold it, and will affirm it before any Prince in Europe, to be the most sovereign, and precious weed, that ever the earth tendered to the use of man.

3 Browning does not smoke; it is his greatest defect - but he tells me that when he got to Florence on his way to Rome, he was so disgusted because he could not find a particular tobacco he liked that he turned back to England and never went to Rome.

Competition No 66. Winner: Mr L. J. Bagg. Answers: Samuel Richardson, Pamela.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tennyson: the Unquiet Heart* was published in 1980.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London.

JOHN NAAB's *The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer* was published in 1981.

ROGER OWEN is a producer in the Continuing Education Department of the BBC.

ROGER PENNIE is Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Techniques of Differential Topology in Relativity*, 1973.

J. R. POLE's books include *Paths to the American Past*, 1980.

LORNA SAGE teaches English in the School of English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

STEPHEN SPENDER's books include *The Thirties and After*, 1978.

CLAIRE TOMALIN is literary editor of the *Sunday Times*. Her books include *Shelley and His World*, 1980.

R. A. TOMLINSON's *Greek Sanctuaries* was published in 1978.

CHRIS WALLACE-CHARRE's books include the novel *Splinters*, 1981.

F. J. B. WATSON's books include *The Wighams Collection*, 1966.

to the editor

Public Lending Right

Sir, - Writers and illustrators will be glad of Robert Hewison's warning (Behind the Lines, April 16) that publishers are again making a grab for Public Lending Right.

While PLR was going through Parliament, the then Minister for the Arts declared: "I am sure that the publishers will recognize, along with everyone else, that the PLR is being established at public expense for the benefit of authors alone."

Besides forgetting or ignoring that, the Publishers Association has conceived the notion that a publisher can act on behalf of (that is, take a percentage of) authors in their dealings with PLR. Happily, any such proceeding is prevented by the PLR rules, which received parliamentary approval in April this year. The application for a book to be registered must be made by the author. Payments will go directly, and secretly, to him. True, he can assign the PLR in a book; but if he does, he must assign it whole, in the sense that he cannot keep a percentage while assigning a percentage to someone else.

It is, therefore, only through the publisher-author contract that a publisher could seek a percentage of PLR. A clause that obliged the author to send the publisher every year a cheque representing a portion of the PLR the author had received or (in years when he received none) a nil statement would be tiresome and perhaps sometimes impossible for the publisher to enforce. Any publisher who gets such a clause into contracts and who then forces the author to pay up will have done some petty bullying and will have picked his victims with precision from among authors who are beginners or paupers or unprotected by trade unions and agents.

If publishers believe they have a case for being paid by public funds when books they have published are lent out from public libraries, then let them campaign to persuade Parliament to set aside money for that purpose. It may take time and energy. Thirty-one years have passed since PLR for writers was first proposed in Britain, by my father. Meanwhile, the simple ethics of the playground are in this case correct: if you want a lolly, ask for one on your own account and don't bully a weaker child into yielding you a lick of his.

BRIGID BROPHY.

Flat 3, 185 Old Brompton Road, London SW5.

EVAN JONES, English Department, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.

Hellenistic Poetry

Sir, - Charles Segal (Letters, April 23) accuses me of "misleading inaccuracies" in my review of his *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral* (April 2). He protests against my saying that too little attention is paid in it to Callimachus and the rest of Hellenistic poetry; his index, he claims, "lists seventeen references" to Callimachus, and more than thirty to other Hellenistic poets.

In fact Segal's index refers to fourteen allusions to Callimachus in his 348 pages. Nine of them are to the opening of the *Aetia*; only three other passages of his poetry are mentioned. In a large book on Hellenistic poetry I found that surprising.

References to other poets tend to a similar thinness. The reader who actually looks up these index entries (certainly the book is excellently indexed) will understand, I think, why I said that the pastoral poems are impoverished by being treated too much as separate entities, with too little specific reference to the large body of Hellenistic poetry outside them.

Emily Dickinson

Sir, - That Emily Dickinson should begin to keep her poems in some sort of order when she began to write copiously, and seriously seems the most natural thing to the world; and is the simplest explanation of the fascicles that she began to sew together c.1858. There are a couple of difficulties in this simple picture, but not of a kind to warrant Mr. L. Rosenthal (March 26) in plunging for "the probable importance of the fascicles as artistic constructs, rather than as mere devices of a desperate orderliness". Indeed, these difficulties (the appearance in F34 of a poem we know to have been written a year or two earlier, the duplication of seventeen poems) suggest only that Dickinson's orderliness was not very thorough (not perhaps sufficiently "desperate"). We can say at best that the order of the fascicles and sets is much the closest we have got to a chronological ordering, and probably as close as we will ever get.

This might seem ineradicably less interesting than Rosenthal's "artistic constructs" to his "organic structure" (that is, of *Song of Myself*). Found a grouping of Cantos, a "double sequence" like one (or two) of Yeats, but when one puts together these scattered phrases, it seems that Rosenthal is more interested in assimilating Dickinson to some view of modernity than in looking for any order or orderings peculiar to these fascicles and sets; indeed, she becomes "along with Whitman but unknown to either, his fellow-inventor of the modern lyrical sequence".

Certainly an attentive reading of the poems in this order will reveal significant groupings that had been lost with the breaking-up of the fascicles, but without exception these seem to me most readily intelligible as manifesting haphazardly Dickinson's immediate preoccupations (F33 is a good example). That no doubt makes them "organic" enough; and the "larger structure" that Rosenthal senses is, I suppose, the development of a remarkable talent over nearly two decades.

Gene Stratton-Porter

Sir, - I share Holly Elley's affection for Gene Stratton-Porter's *Girl of the Limberlost*, mentioned in her review (March 26) of Mildred D. Taylor's fine *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*. Some misstatements in the review about Stratton-Porter and her books deserve correcting, though.

Gene Stratton-Porter (with a hyphen) set her (not "his") *Limberlost* novels in northern Indiana (not the "deep South") in the first fifteen years or so of this century (not "during the Depression"). The best of them all, *Lullaby*, a fictionalized account of her own childhood, takes place in the 1870s.

Many episodes centre around spunky kids; and, as a child in the 1930s, I liked my grandmother to read those chapters aloud to me. But I would hesitate to count these books among the "classics" of American children's literature. These best-sellers were aimed at, and found, an audience of youths and adults. James D. Hart, in *The Popular Book: A History of American Literary Taste* (University of California Press, 1950, recently reissued in paperback), gives a good account of the reasons for the books' tremendous sales during and after World War I.

KAREN REEDS, University of California Press, 2223 Fulton Street, Berkeley, California 94720.

King's College Library, Cambridge

Sir, - Internal alterations will be made to King's College Library this summer and autumn, in order to improve facilities for readers of the Research Collections. As a result we shall have temporarily to close the Library to scholars wishing to consult medieval or modern manuscripts or certain classes of printed books. We regret very much any inconvenience that this may cause. The closure will begin on July 1, 1982, and it is hoped that we shall be able to reopen on December 6, 1982.

This closure will be in addition to our annual closure during the undergraduate examination period, which will run this year from May 3 to June 11.

Readers wishing to consult the Collections outside the closed periods are, of course, always welcome to do so, and should write, as usual, giving at least one week's notice of their intended visit.

P. J. CROFT, M. A. HALLS, King's College, Cambridge.

We regret that Barbara Coffey's letter (April 30) attempting to clarify a confusion in Blake Morrison's review of *From Bonaparte to Our House* by Tom Wolfe (March 26) was itself wrongly printed. The architect of the Watts Towers was Simon Rodia.

Down by the riverside

By Humphrey Carpenter

MARY PRIOR: *Fisher Row* Fisherman, Bargemen, and Canal Boatmen in Oxford, 1500-1900. 406pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50. 0 19 82264 7

Hopkins, who dismissed Oxford's outer streets as "a base and brickish skirt", really ought to have taken a closer look. Just at the time he was writing, a waterside lane that lies on an arm of the Thames by Hythe Bridge, between the college and the railway station, was passing through the third and final phase of a colourful existence that stretched back at least to the sixteenth century. Fisher Row in the 1870s was the home of the city's canal boatmen. A century earlier, the Thames bargemen who took their odd flat-bottomed craft up past Hopkirk's Binsey poplars to the Upper River and Lechlade (a district the "West Country") had made their homes in the Row. And before their time, Fisher Row had indeed been "Fib Row", as it has often been called by its inhabitants, for it housed the fishermen who got a living, meagre enough at times, by providing fresh-water catches from Thames and Cherwell for the tables of the university during compulsory fast days. The fishermen, in fact, were dependent on the university, and vice versa; indeed, between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the number of apprentices taken on by the fishermen rose and fell in almost exact ratio to the number of students at the colleges.

This is just one of many such eye-opening facts unearthed by Mary Prior in her work of "micro-history". In a quiet way, the book catches between the "classics" of American children's literature. These best-sellers were aimed at, and found, an audience of youths and adults. James D. Hart, in *The Popular Book: A History of American Literary Taste* (University of California Press, 1950, recently reissued in paperback), gives a good account of the reasons for the books' tremendous sales during and after World War I.

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herself is the first to admit that she has not entirely pulled that wall down. This of course is frustrating: in the course of the 350 pages of text of *Fisher Row* we learn so much and yet so little. It is rather like finding a photograph album of one's ancestors that lacks captions. Through Dr Prior's pages parade a succession of Bossons, Beesleys, Tawnies, Wodesons, Beauchamps and all the other families who lived in the Row for generations after generation; but though we hear of their births, marriages, deaths and wills, there are few moments at which we can really enter into their lives. It must also be said that there is, or seems to be, a degree of repetition in the book; or perhaps it is merely that the material inevitably has the appearance of repetition, so much did the same things happen to the same families again and again down the generations. Against this, Dr Prior writes with a vigour and wit that carries her readers over almost every longueur.

The book will be valuable in several fields. Students of the history of the usage - an under-studied subject which throws a remarkable amount of light on economic and social conditions - will be grateful to Dr Prior for her detailed record of the disputes between the Castle Mill and Osney Mill, both of which were near the Row and affected its fortunes. The Castle Mill was the town's preserve; Osney was moribund, and eventually passed into the hands of Christ Church. The dispute (which involved the erection of weirs, the digging of semi-licit channels, and all the other terms of industry) that could be found up and down the Thames long before the demolition of the Castle Mill (Domesday) was the town versus the crown. Historians of the university will value this, and will prize the information that the Vice-Chancellor's men could seize fish from wholesalers if they thought it too highly priced. (North Oxford must regret the passing of those days.) The book is also a minor classic of social history, especially the history of the family. Such occupational communities as fisher Row were of course, characteristic of pre-industrial Britain and it is intriguing to discover that, within them, the extended family seems to have been the rule. Fisher Row was, as Prior observes, "a sort of large household under many adjacent rooftrees".

Fisher Row is, moreover, a case-study in mobility and stability. West Oxford, had, then as now, a considerable vagrant population, originally attracted to Oxford by monastic hospitality and then by student generosity; but while the beggars and "travelling women" came and went, the fishermen, bargemen and canal boatmen stayed in the Row, mostly marrying into each other's families, and even keeping their distance from the town's other waterside community at Folly Bridge, which housed the rather grander bargemen who took their craft down the lower reaches, to London.

The Row might have lost its identity at the end of the eighteenth century if it had not been for the building. Just then, of the Oxford Canal, which had its terminal basin a few yards from the Row, where Nutfield College row stands. The canal narrow-boats kept the Row alive for another century. As late as 1910 it still housed such characters as Abel Beasley, fisherman and waterman, who once rowed his musty galios a steam launch and won by a hundred yards. But in the end the canal faded away, the railway, and bus stations became the dominant features of the landscape in which Fisher Row is set, and the Row itself is now largely gone. One of the houses that does remain is the base of Oxford's archaeological unit - appropriately enough, for as Dr Prior shows, the Row is as exciting a dig as any prehistoric site.

Oxford and Oxfordshire edited by Antonia Fraser (830p. Secker and Warburg. £5.50. 0 436 16260 1) is one of the first in a new series of regional poetry anthologies. In *Verse*, under the general editorship of Emma Tennant.

Before the Trek

By Roger Owen

ANDRÉ BRINK:
A Chain of Voices
525pp. Faber, £7.95.
0 571 11874 7

André Brink is an Afrikaner and a dissident, a man passionately opposed to the apartheid system; in courageous and honourable combination which is still sufficiently unusual to arouse excitement and, in some cases, to unhinge judgment. He has suggested (in an article in *Index on Censorship*) that writers in open societies, where anything goes, are tempted to "gimmickery", "self-indulgence" and "striving after effect". A *Chain of Voices*, Mr Brink's very ambitious work in what might be called the (tragic, historical, allegorical) mode, demonstrates some other truths. First, that those temptations are universal. Second, that an invigorating climate of repression does not, of itself, provide immunity to them.

The novel is set on a Boer farm in the Cape Colony during the pre-Trek 1820s. The British now rule from Cape Town and a wind of change is blowing. Among the up-country Boers there is much resentment, while their slaves, hearing rumours of emancipation, are restless. A small-scale revolt takes place, with murder and other confused and lurid mayhem, and is suppressed with brutality. "But the fire," the main part of the narrative broodingly concludes, "the fire remains."

The "voices" of the title are those of characters who themselves carry the narrative and its cargo of messages. These monologues are "inter-

cut" in the manner of certain portentous South African landscape is yet again impregnated with significance; there is much local colour and a torrent of historical exotica. There is little sense, though, of the otherness of the past. Some of the musings of these simple Boers are couched in the language of magazine psychology — they are to be found "compensating" or "wondering whether they can adapt" or trying to "prove things to themselves". The monologues tend to conclude on reverberatingly "symbolic" lines, for example: "The jackals will be howling again tonight."

The characters are plainly intended as archetypes. There is Galant, the slave who leads the rising, who is Humankind itself. "Galant has many fathers. No one is his father and everybody is..." There is Ma Rose, ancient crone, Clorius, and repository of old Africa's secret wisdom ("My body is deep"). There is the *baas*, archetypically named Van der Merwe. He is a guilt-ridden Calvinist bound in a love-hate relationship with Galant, erstwhile friend of his childhood. The voices face strong competition from the bustling noises made by the outsider as he strains to point up the contemporary significances of his tale.

The novel reveals some intractable features of Afrikaans culture: fierce moral categories; a hectic interest in black sexuality; a strong sense of destiny and mission. The Old Testament too exercises a baleful influence on a prose style which goes, regardless of cost, for sonority. Indeed the allegory itself seems to be provided by the author as a kind of Word, inviting exegesis and intended to give guidance to the South Africans in their present trials.

A characteristic episode is one involving a stallion. This beast appears early but by then we have read enough to suspect that it will carry a weight somewhat heavier than is usual even for literary stallions. And so it does. The horse is a present from old Piet to one of his sons. But who is to break it in? Unsurprisingly, the two white boys fail, and it is Galant's turn. He, we know, has an intuitive affinity with animals (a notion with some not obviously liberal resonances, this) and so succeeds. His reflections follow. The horse he thinks "is a wild creature meant for wild and mountain, not for yard and stable". How can it allow itself to be "broken in so shamefully?" And finally, "it is as if something had died inside me". The episode is over, but lest its drift is lost on us we get, a few pages later, some assistance in the form of a comment on Galant's character from an old slave. "There's no remedy for Galant's sort," he ponders, "they belong to a breed of horse that refuses to be broken."

The reader is being sjamboked — and by what? By an image without substance, and which, followed through, misleads — diminishing what it intends to enlarge. "If a writer," says Brink in his index piece, "is really serious about his trade, he probes and examines even politics in such a way that it becomes valid as aesthetic experience". How much "probing", one asks, has gone into this equation of human freedom with galloping stallions?

Much praise has been bestowed on the author. The indignities to non-whites which the catalogues are of course real, as is the viciousness of the system he condemns. So too were the brutalities portrayed, say, in the television serial *Roois*, which in atmosphere and quality (its craftsmanship was superior) is similar to this. The book at times is inevitably moving. But only a vague sense of the awesomeness of the subject-matter, and a comfortable feeling of political agreement could conceal from the reader some glaring aesthetic faults — derivativeness; a propensity to cliché; a striving for "fine" writing; a certain woodenness of style. It seems to me that these faults are not to be dismissed as trivialities — they throw some doubt on the author's sense of what is really the case in the South African experience.

In the salon

By Anne Duchêne

ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD:
Getting It Right
264pp. Hamish Hamilton, £7.95.
0 241 10805 5

How the Modest Hairdresser in De-fiance of a Millionaire, becomes involved with a Member of a Superior Class, and Finally Learns that Love was All the Time to be Found in the Cubicle at Work. Some rather maudlin modern Mail Flanders? The newest packaged product, hot from the conveyor-belt? Alas, no: an outline of Elizabeth Jane Howard's new and, as her publishers say, "long-awaited" novel, which seems to have been written under some odd and regrettable compulsion towards up-to-date-ness, from which she should feel herself honourably absolved.

Her third virgin hairdresser is male, slightly improbably aged thirty-one, a victim of acne and bald, living at home in New Barnet with his parents, his records, his poetry books, and his fantasies about women. At the book's outset, he goes to a party in Knightsbridge with some homosexuals he knows (introduced, one imagines, to allow the obligatory glimpse into their ménage à trois), and is bedded, with estate success, by the rich boy. There also meets there a poor little liberated wreck of a contemporary rich girl called Minerva, a rather old-fashioned Howard touch — who travels with a parrot in her Mini; but their relations remain quite an-

Plain invention

By Adam Mars-Jones

BERNARD MAC LAVERTY:
A Time to Dance
and Other Stories
174pp. Jonathan Cape, £6.50.
0 224 02018 8

Bernard Mac Laverty came to notice with the novel *Lamb*, but his first book was a volume of short stories, and this second collection shows few signs of uncertainty or amateurism. His title, though, is misleadingly pompous and elegiac; pregnant with biblical reference, it conveys a bogus repose which has nothing in common with these lively and varied stories.

The book, admittedly, takes a little time to get under way. If you call a story about blocked affection and mutual misunderstanding "Father and Son", and set it in a safe-ton Ireland, you are issuing an open invitation to cliché; the resulting tale is likely to be inferior in all respects to the original notebook-entry "Father and Son". Blocked affection, mutual misunderstanding. Stir-fry Ireland.

But with the first sentence of the second story, "A Time to Dance", things take a turn for the better: "Nelson, with a patch over one eye, stood looking idly into Mothercare's window". Already in the absurd tension between the proper nouns there is more literary excitement than in all six worthy pages of "Father and Son".

Mothercare is only Mothercare, but Nelson turns out to be the name of a schoolboy playing truant; in the mother had called him Nelson because, she said, she thought that his father had been a seafaring man. This explanation of Nelson's naming provides the seed of the whole story, which reveals how Mrs Skelly comes into such casual contact with seafaring folk — usually of a rank rather lower than admiral.

The book contains little that is strikingly new on the level of plot; there is adolescent trauma, there is mature adjustment, and there is senescent defeat. But luckily the short story as a form thrives on transformations of the familiar; only minor miracles of phrasing and point of view are called for, and one suc-

cessful device is enough to ensure the quality of a story.

So "My Dear Palestina" suddenly becomes an excellent piece of work by virtue of a single understated effect:

"I practised it — all week end", he said. "Oh Danny", Miss Schwartz let a gasp out of her. "Say that again." "I practised it all week end."

The typographical hiccup beautifully enacts the change taking place in Danny, a change which isn't recognized until it is named by someone else: "Danny, your voice is breaking."

This is the turning-point in Danny's development; he forfeits the innocent rapport he has had with Miss Schwartz his piano teacher, and must eventually return to the narrow confines of his family. But his progress depends for its poignancy on the vividness of individual phrases.

The stories are set in Ireland or in Scotland (respectively the countries of Mr Mac Laverty's origin and adoption), and the idiosyncratic dialects largely in the dialogue: "you're mad in the skull" or character may say, or "that puts the heart sideways in me". But more evident in the narrative voice is an educated Irish tradition of inventive plainness (respectfully for instance by Stephen De-alus's saying "rundish" for "funnel"), which often extends the usage of a common word, playing with the parts of speech without any sacrifice of clarity; so an old man "knuckles" the corners of his eyes clean in the morning ("No joke"), and a cushion smells "of cloth and human" in the boy who kneels against it for his prayers ("The Beginnings of a Sin"). These little alertnesses of language make all the difference to the volume, and the general excellence of the writing draws attention away from the occasional lapses into the thumping last sentence of "The Daily Woman" and the occasional intrusive symbol (the squirming eponyms of "Eels").

A *Time to Dance* is a more than promising collection by a writer with a real affinity for the short story form. He has yet to write a story that cries out for instant inclusion in anthologies or committal to memory; but he is well on the way.

honoured comic stock, but sound stock, observed here with what may well be old-fashioned bourgeois realism but which still makes one laugh. Laughter, then, happily, is not yet something Miss Howard has renounced. The portraits of all the women are also painted with a full and confident brush, very humanely; they all seem very likeable and intelligent women. (There are also some very small, flawlessly enigmatised portraits of the trainee's little boy.) The trouble is that the interesting women are only interpolated among the less interesting men, which is a pity. The trainee's little boy, who is a particularly kind, clever, lonely, large lady, is dismissed after fulfilling her function; Minerva is left as an impossible, which she is, but after spending so much time on her it seems a waste; the trainee only comes into focus at the very end. Most of the time, we are stuck with Gavin, and too often with loyally dull details about back-combing and back-biting in the dreary salon.

The choice of this as a setting may itself suggest a rather desperate casting about for a known ground. A sadder error seems to be the author's supposing, for whatever reasons, that she should achieve at least a particular gift: a steady gaze at the human relationships, a prose that at its best had the texture and sheen of some luxurious fabric. Perhaps, even, these seem to her naively, self-indulgent, frivolous gifts, now-days, and once a serious novelist must eschew. But how much better it would be to admit to adolescent indulgence, and allow other people to share it.

Naturally, with such an author, there are graces and rewards. The book is quite strangely patchy; incident merely follows incident, at the author's will, not by any natural progression. The best patches occur when Miss Howard gives her proven virtues some rein. There are some fine set-pieces — a grisly luncheon, for instance, with Minerva's parents, caught in a general air of wealth in a luncheon with a parrot in her Mini; but Gavin's whole lower-middle-class family, who come from little-

Independence and accommodation

By J. R. Pole

RICHARD R. JOHNSON:
Adjustment to Empire
The New England Colonies 1675-1715
270pp. Leicester University Press.
£11.50.
0 7185 1208 1

When Edward Randolph landed in Boston in 1676 bearing a commission from the king, he lost no time in summoning the colonial council. Before reading aloud the royal proclamation he properly removed his hat. In this gesture he was followed by three members of the council: the governor with four other members remained covered. This incident — which must be one of very few not mentioned in Richard Johnson's account of the relationship of New England to the English nation in this decisive period — exemplifies two principal themes. One is the question of autonomy asserted by the leaders of Massachusetts on almost every public occasion; the other is the incipient split between those who were prepared symbolically to deny the king's presence and those who, for reasons of religious dissent or mercantile interest, were willing to accommodate.

If the English government had been in the habit of thinking more consistently about colonial affairs it might have seen possible advantages in this division. But in face of many provocations it moved only with slow and inconsistent steps. Dr Johnson disagrees with those who have seen the later Stuart elaboration of a long-planned grand design to make the Empire conform to their plans for absolutism at home. The sources of the Dominion of New England are to be found not in the 1670s but in renewed Stuart confidence after the failure of exclusion. It was the intemperances of Massachusetts that brought on the final destruction of the charter.

On the whole Johnson plays down the sectarian divisions within Massachusetts until reaching the rising against Sir Edmund Andros, when they suddenly acquire a significance for which we are not fully prepared. Even the hated Dominion had influential friends within the colony. Moreover the Dominion's structure gave the governor certain tactical advantages: Rhode Islanders on his council had no objection for the former Congregationalist establishment in Massachusetts. Johnson thinks that when Andros set out to put all land titles on a new basis, he did not mean thereby to effect a redistribution of landed property. But he certainly caused landowners to fear for their security. One of his errors was the crude rigour with which he carried out his instructions. It was not by breaking the law so much as by having bad diplomacy and mismanagement that he united so much of the province against him. We are left with the inference that a more skilful governor could have made the Dominion work in such a way that it could have survived the Glorious Revolution, which would have had profound consequences for Anglo-American history. J. R. Western pointed out that William's first inclination, on the privy council's advice, was to leave the Dominion intact. The Revolution had no necessary consequences for America. Its consequences had to be extracted from the very confusing political scene in London after the accession of William and Mary.

Johnson therefore proceeds to a very detailed, but impeccably clear account of Increase Mathers' prolonged negotiations with various English authorities — not excluding four influential ladies about the court. He played his hopes on the crown — that of James II. Then he swung to support a bill to restore old charters that had been struck down since 1689, and helped to draft it to include those of the colonies. But these debates served to inform William that the colonies were among the most loyal of his subjects, and he dissolved parliament without letting the bill pass. Johnson then turned his attention back to the court, from which a new

charter was about to proceed. The man who had once told Massachusetts not to make any concession to the crown, and who had arrived in England expecting to be treated as an emissary of a semi-independent state, was now told that the colony's consent "was neither expected nor desired".

Yet he had gained more than at this stage he might have dared to hope — and more, probably, than any of his countrymen could have got. Johnson is right to call this the most notable of colonial agencies. Representative government was restored with a large measure of home rule. Mather saw the vital importance of accepting this charter; he was by this time a sadder but a very much wiser man.

Elisha Cooke, more an irritant than a colleague, never fully accepted this necessity. And Mather's difficulties once he returned to urge the charter of 1691 on his countrymen raise the more general question of the nature of opposition in New England. Connections with earlier, political alignments might here have been more closely ex-

amined; and if they did not stand up to examination there it would be arguable that in spite of the subsequent appearance of continuity, the Revolution in New England actually represented a more profound rupture with the past than has usually been thought.

Johnson notes that in the early eighteenth century a growing scepticism towards authority made opposition respectable. With the growth of new interests and deeper settlements he discerns deepening cultural differences between coast and hinterland, adding to existing political animosities between the part towns and the back-country. But at some risk of contradiction he later denies that the differences between "court" and "country" in Massachusetts depended on this distinction between coast and back-country. Two political cultures were emerging, "one local and the other provincial, one predominantly egalitarian and consensual in its social and political beliefs and the other placing a greater emphasis upon the need for hierarchy and deference to one's superiors".

Ten years after the close of John-

son's period, no fewer than thirty-two members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives voted against accepting the Explanatory Charter that had been sent out by the privy council. Since all Boston's four members voted with this minority, this remarkable demonstration of opposition mentality must have emanated from something more than back-country hostility or an "egalitarian consensual culture". There was a widespread and endemic opposition mentality which seems periodically to have affected assembly leadership.

Royal government was the irreducible structure to which Massachusetts politicians had to conform. Johnson observes that royal government preserved and accentuated a division of function in government that was becoming obsolete in England, and thus preserved the separation of powers. Meanwhile the new charter was becoming encapsulated within the mythology of the old. This mythology assimilated New England's revolt to the larger aims and achievements of the Glorious Revolution, at the cost of leaving understandable ambiguities for the

role of parliament. The colonists' allegiance, as Johnson shrewdly observes, was always in English constitutionalism rather than to the crown.

But what was English constitutionalism, and who was its arbiter? The question lies largely outside this book's scope, though interesting traces of material for an answer can be found here. The author's main conclusion is that New England's "Adjustment to Empire" was a generally satisfactory solution to its real needs in the eighteenth century; it lasted until new problems and policies arose to alter the entire balance of the relationship.

To complete the picture it could be pointed out that this was a largely mutual adjustment, into which Britain entered to her own advantage. Even more than in the previous century, the colonies were essential elements of the British nation. Neither can be properly understood in its historical context without the other. To that understanding Dr Johnson's comprehensive book makes a studious, carefully reasoned and thoroughly intelligible contribution.

A touch of the exotic

By Nicholas Shakespeare

NORMAN LEWIS:
Cuban Passage
250pp. Collins, £7.50.
0 00 22620 0

In his travel books and novels, Norman Lewis has thrived on old-civilization being put to the sword. From Cambodia to Colombia, the cut and thrust of civil war and colonial bureaucracy have provided material to make him, in V. S. Pritchett's eyes, "one of the very few capable experts in the novel of the exotic and revolutionary setting". Unfortunately, the setting is most often the thing, and in it, Lewis's characters tend to drain of colour.

Cuban Passage is set in 1959, a time when the author was reporting Castro's chances of success for *The Sunday Times*. The novel attempts to mate the growth of a teenage boy with Cuba's own turbulent coming of age. Dick Frazer is a gauche fifteen-year-old with a history of dyslexia and juvenile delinquency. When his mother takes a Latin lover, he takes exception to him. Juan Silson, a powerful ex-hypnotist or man who reeks of black magic and narcotics and his efforts to outwit Dick with a shark-fishing trip come to nothing. Having been flogged up on Havana's waterfront by an embryonic rebel called Jerry, Dick determines to kill Silson during a birthday deer hunt. By hook or by crook but largely by luck, he manages to shoot the man. Then he falls prey to Cuban justice. As the rebels approach the city and armed troops surrender to men on bicycles, Dick chews cockroaches in prison-mad waits for diplomats to secure his release. His freedom coincides with Batista's downfall in a dramatic, if somewhat unlikely climax.

Norman Lewis is as skilful a painter as he is a shifter of scenes, from the briny wharves and sombre courtroom to the outlying cane-fields. He succeeds in colchic, with all its colours and cigar smell, a jaunty, hip-swinging socioly which has half-

digested the systems it purports to reject. Sugar aristocrats nose their Cadillac through the Prado, village bands crash into the triumphal march from *Aida* and zombi charms fill the counters of Woolworths. Yet "at one level this is a very African scene". The characters are marked by the imagery of hunting, fishing — and voodoo. Silson's mesmerizing power comes from a silver medal round his neck, etched with the head of a slave ancestor. When he spins it, his victims feel giddy and tell the truth in pliant voices. Even after his death, the image of St Barbara, with her pink cheeks and doll's painted mouth, jumps out everywhere. The magistrate who condemns Dick and the doctor who tries to seduce him are described in her terms. The trouble is that the author tends to make effigies of all his characters. Granted that British diplomats are sipping ducks for the novelist, it is hard to credit embassy officials with a willingness to swap Dick's release for a UK visa on the passport of a man who controls the world trade in narcotics. Mrs Frazer, a "Guardian reader" interested in Third World problems, remains untouched by her lover's demise: "Her long ordeal had left no trace whatever on her face". Her son is equally stolid. From the start, Dick is too dissimulating and mature a teenager to be effective as a jealous adolescent. He carefully plots a murder and is unruffled when punished for it.

In his travels through Cambodia and Laos, as recounted in that excellent book, *A Dragon Apparent*, Norman Lewis was dealing with a cast which presented and arranged itself without him. The major flaw in *Cuban Passage* is a lack of focus. In choosing to write about a corrupt régime, an insurrection against it and an expatriate community caught in the cross-fire, he needs a less dyslexic character than Dick as go-between. The confusion is reflected in the prose: "Dick and Jerry snuggled themselves into the gardens, where Jerry resisted the overtures of a homosexual guest, and then was half-strangled by him until Dick beat the man over the head with his box." As in the novel, it is unclear who is the real hero.

Radicalism and compromise

By W. R. Brock

ERIC FONER:
Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War
250pp. Oxford University Press.
£11.50.
0 19 512781 7

Many scholars must ask themselves whether to reprint articles and other short pieces in a single volume. Eric Foner has brought together seven previously published pieces, added an Introduction, and given the collection a comprehensive title. The first justification is accessibility, for some of the articles appeared in journals that are not found outside large libraries. The second justification, quoted from his mentor, Richard Hofstadter, is that such a collection is "unified by some underlying intellectual intent... a set of related concerns and methods". The first of these concerns is to place politics and ideas, once more at the centre of historical inquiry. Whether this concern is reactionary or dynamic depends upon one's assessment of what so many American historians have been doing during the past decade. As Foner explains,

In place of conventional narratives of political and intellectual development, American historiography now produced an abundance of works in various sub-fields of social investigation: family history,

ethnic history, labour history, the histories of sexuality, criminality, and childhood. As historians intruded into the intimate lives of past generations of Americans, public events and institutions receded into the background.

A glance through the programme of any major American historical conference held during the past three years will confirm this diagnosis. Free hypothetical "traditional historians", waking from a twenty-year sleep, would find hardly one session dealing with the problems to which he had devoted his scholarly life. He would find himself in emphatic agreement with Foner's observation that "the broadening of historians' concerns went hand in hand with a narrowing of their vision and the result was often a specialisation, even trivial, inquiry. American society was divided and subdivided so completely that the ideal of re-creating history as a lived experience seemed more remote than ever."

The new history, has, of course, added great depth to historical scholarship, and its insistence that elites were by definition unrepresentative is a salutary warning to anyone who tries to understand the small number of men who make policies. Yet catastrophe cannot be understood by reading the annals of minorities; if the new social history has brought an awareness of long-standing continuities, it is singularly inept at handling discontinuity. This is a limitation which must first be historicised, as Foner, whose instincts and sympathies are all with men and

women who have wanted to change the world.

This is the underlying concern of the essays, but there is a further and more important development. Radical ideas wither away unless they can widen their appeal, draw in moderate and even apathetic men, and organize for action. This was the lesson of his path-breaking study of the early Republican party, *Free Soil, Free Labour, and Free Men*. Once a radical thinker begins this transformation he must work in harness with others whose convictions are weak or even hostile to the mission. This gives contemporaries plenty of ammunition, for a reformer who seems to compromise is always the most vulnerable of men. Modern American historians have been all too ready to pursue this line of denigration. The Abolitionists came from a frustrated élite, and, because some hesitated in pressing for unequivocal equality, they were racists at heart. Free Soilers included men who did not want blacks in the West, whether they were slave or free. Radical Republicans shared some ideas with aggressive capitalist entrepreneurs. Reformers of all kinds were elitist, and attempted to impose middle-class values upon society. Too many modern American historians have been too ready to accept only what they study failure for, as soon as they confront success, they must also take complexity into account.

A critique of this approach is implicit in all these essays. Abolition too real and the Labour Movement, admits that some abolitionists, notably Garrison, were very unympathetic to labour agitation; but this does not mean that all abolitionists were social conservatives; nor does it mean that working men were unmoved by anti-slavery. What it does mean is that abolitionists cannot be separated from their times. "It will not do to defang the abolitionist crusade: it was indeed a radical impulse, challenging fundamental aspects of American life... But to its view of economic relations it did speak the language of northern society." Some Free Soilers were "racist", but the movement as a whole was a significant step towards the future; it identified the "slave power" as the enemy of poor men everywhere, and helped to formulate the ideology of free labour — which may look middle-class to some modern commentators but was a not ignoble view of human betterment.

The attempt to introduce the system of free labour in the South offered the freed necessarily meant preaching to the virtues of regularity, thrift, hard work, temperance, education, observance of "contracts" and willingness to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. In some cases it meant consorting with officials of the Freedmen's Bureau appearing to side with employers. Yet even those who had most reason to com-

plain of the new system of wage labour agreed that it was immeasurably better than slavery.

This gives point to Foner's essay on Thaddeus Stevens. In nineteenth-century terms Stevens was the most consistent of radicals, yet he was also keenly aware of the need to play politics, and while putting himself ahead of opinion, never neglected the fact that he lost touch with the possible. His commitment to land reform — confiscating the land of larger owners and distributing it to ex-slaves — shocked many contemporaries. Yet in the past he had shown uncanny prescience in seeing how opinion would move in a revolutionary situation. There is an implication that if he had not died in 1868 he would have kept up the radical pressure, allowed no easy compromise with the old South, and brought a majority to realize the necessity for land reform. This would, perhaps, have made the South a better place.

The last essay in the book, "The Land League and Irish-Americanists", sits somewhat awkwardly with the others. It is full of intrinsic interest and, where the other essays re-work familiar material, breaks new ground. The connecting theme is that here, once more, reform movements, though apparently quite separate, found common cause. Irish labour reform and the Knights of Labour reformed on the surface, nothing in common, yet where Irish-Americans predominated, the Knights merged social radicalism and Irish nationalism as effectively as the Land League had done. This essay, then, may be set beside those on the Abolitionists and Free Soil: in all cases men who were dissatisfied with society as they found it identified common enemies and made common cause.

A collection of essays necessarily leaves large gaps. The perspective essay on the causes of the Civil War brings us to the point of secession in the Lower South. It does not tackle two further questions: why did the Upper South secede, and why did the answer to the second question is to be found in *Free Soil, Free Labour, and Free Men*, but Douglas Democrats as well as Republicans rallied to the cause of Union. Without this there would have been no war; merely the allegedly weak but perhaps statesmanlike stance adopted by Buchanan of refusing to recognize Southern independence but exercising Federal authority only where the people accepted it. If we can obtain a clear idea of why so many responded when Lincoln called for men, we will also be able to grasp more fully what happened to Northern opinion once the fighting began. Perhaps Eric Foner has this problem in mind. His essays in this book, because they discuss the kind of man and reform during the war would be thoughtful, fresh, and illuminating.

My Father and I and Billy Two Rivers

Our favoured wrestler, the Mohawk Indian.

We would sit in the local barber-shop — 'Could he not afford a decent hair-cut?' — To watch him suffer the slaps and arrows Of a giant Negro who fought dirty.

The Negro's breath-taking crotch-hold and slam Left all of us out for a count of two.

The barber knew the whole thing was a sham.

Next week would see Billy back on his feet For one of his withering Tomahawk Chops To a Bengali's crew.

shaking him out Of the ring and into the wide-mouthed crowd Like a chest of tea at the Boston Tea Party.

Paul Muldoon

The Attic constitution

By G. L. Huxley

P. J. RHODES

A Commentary on the Aristotelian *Athenian Politeia*
795pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £45.
0 19 814004 5

"Er spricht zu uns", wrote Wilamowitz in *Aristoteles und Athen* after the publication of the London Papyrus of the *Athenian Politeia*. Many scholars have agreed that Aristotle wrote the work, despite the difficulties of style and content, but P. J. Rhodes in the philological introduction to this excellent book decides against Aristotle, while admitting that on the evidence we have Aristotle could have been the author. As matters stand, uncertainty concerning the authorship does not diminish the significance of the text because, as Dr Rhodes robustly declares, "as a historian A. P. is mediocre (though by no means useless to us), but as a describer of constitutional practice he is first in the field."

Questions of composition, structure and language are first discussed. Next comes the commentary on the historical part of the work, including

fragments from the lost beginning. Finally, we are given a detailed account of A. P.'s account of the complex functioning of the Athenian state in his own time. All historians of Athens will need to use this book, and the more they study it the more they will admire the consistently sound judgement of Dr Rhodes and see how hard he has laboured. A discussion of the mythical kings and of dark-age Attica is followed by an investigation of the Kylonian conspiracy. The legislation of Dracon and the reforms of Solon are soberly examined with proper attention to agrarian distress. In Attica, Rhodes argues, with evident correctness, that the notorious "Constitution of Dracon" is a later insertion. The suggestion that the insertion may have led to the loss of a passage concerning Dracon's *thesmoi* is attractive. (How this tendentious fiction reached A. P. remains obscure: that it was among texts gathered for Theophrastus' *Nomoi* is possible.) With good reason Rhodes suspects that the puzzling - and chronologically dubious - association of Themistokles with Ephialtes in A. P. 25.3-4 is also an insertion. The analysis of problems arising from A. P.'s combination of politically opposed notions of the Pentekontetia is especially praiseworthy. Anyone needing to find his way through the maze of

documentary problems arising from the régime of the Four Hundred and its aftermath will find in Rhodes a long-suffering guide. At the conclusion of the first part, however, in Aristotle's authorship could wish that rather more emphasis had been given to the historiographical significance of constitutional transformations (*metaboleis*), since such changes are prominent in the *Politeia*. Rhodes quite correctly insists that the philosophical content of A. P. is small, but we must always remember that Aristotle was not only a philosopher.

The constitutional commentary is informed by deep knowledge of the Attic orators and by precise study of inscriptions. Rhodes knows how to interpret evidence from excavations in the Agora: it is good to see due recognition being given to the work of Professor Daw and his pupils on the operation of the jury-courts. The examination of the role of flow of water-clocks is typical of the commentator's punctilious concern with detail. According to A. P. 41.2 the power of the *demoi* continued to increase during the interval between the democratic restoration in 403 and the time of writing. Rhodes however has cogently pointed out that institutional changes in the fourth century such as the granting of power to the controllers of the theatre fund did not make the state more democratic.

though there was a gain in efficiency. Philosophical concerns may have affected historical interpretation here, as they have in 13.4 where the *constat stasis* is linked to a "moderate polity".

A selection of particular comments on this tautly learned book follows. P73: the dates assigned to the mythical kings Kekrops II and Pandion II do not come from Eratosthenes; they are Kastor's as worked out by E. Schwartz. We do not know that Eratosthenes assigned a date to any event earlier than the Fall of Troy. P179: Rhodes sees that Solon's calling himself a boundary-post (*horos*) is awkward in 12.5: did he not stand upright (*orthos*) in the space between the factions? P254: Ridings of unequal sizes were grouped to produce Tribes of almost equal sizes: so there is little or no room for soriticism in Kleisthenes' cadastre. Emend therefore in 21.4 the suspect *ekletré* to *epitrope*: thus he filled each Tribe to its complement of three Ridings - one each from City, Coast and Midland. Political thinkers worried by the decay of provincial Britain should remember Kleisthenes: the introduction of multi-regional constituencies and ostracism would be a useful move towards breaking the debilitating grip of London and the Oxfordshire oligarchy on the country. P269: since *prōton* is an

easy corruption of *prōton* in Hippias, Androtion (324 F6) may simply have said that the law of ostracism had been introduced "early" than the ostracism of Hippias. And A. P. would agree that the law was enacted earlier than 483/2 BC. P308: since the *politeia* ascribed to Hippodamos by Aristotle in *Politics* 2.8 is theoretical, it is not certain that he introduced it as a practical support for sons of citizens who fell in war. P519: Rhodes thinks that the rule concerning *prytanes* in 35.4-day years may not always have been observed: if so, one tribe might be at an advantage over others; a day was a long time in Attic politics. P581: since space and letters suit *apagoge* in 48.4, the meaning may be that at times of arrest examinations of officials must sit by the statues of the tribal heroes. P650: the Polemarch's office to Enyalios looks ancient; add to the *Knosian* evidence the Argive cult of Enyalios (L. H. Jeffery, *Local Scripts* 156). The few cross-references to "p.000" are disappointing. There are not many misprints - one should there be at more than a shilling a page. Dr Rhodes's skilled examination of fragments from lost parts of A. P. shows how useful a new edition, with a competent commentary, of the fragments of the other Aristotelian *Politeia* would be.

No room for heroics

By R. A. Tomlinson

AUDREY GRIFFIN

Sikyon
171pp, with 17 black-and-white illustrations. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £15.
0 19 814718 X

The modern traveller, rushing along the new motorway from Corinth to Patras, will need less than ten minutes to pass through the territory of ancient Sikyon, in all probability noticing nothing. It begins not where it ends. What will impress him are the superb views across the Gulf of Corinth, to the promontory of Perachora. Helikon and the mountains of Boiotia beyond - paradoxically, a view which does not appear to have impressed the ancient Sikyonians, for although their gymnasium is sited to take full benefit of it, the colonnades and walls shut it off completely.

Sikyon was not one of the more important ancient Greek city-states. Never a super-power, like Athens or Sparta, not even comfortably in the second rank like Corinth. It plays a negligible role in the records of Greek history. Audrey Griffin makes what she can of it, but it does not amount to much, and even that little is full of uncertainties. More significant were the great artists Sikyon produced, sculptors in bronze and painters, but even here their work is lost. The enormous reputation achieved by the Sikyonian sculptor Lysippos in his long life and prolific output - supposedly nearly two thousand statues - can hardly be appreciated from Roman copies or the lumpy Agias at Delphi. But at least Lysippos and his followers worked at Sikyon. His artistic predecessor, Polykleitos, whose masterpiece, the Canon, was first acclaimed by Lysippos as his master, may perhaps have been Sikyonian by origin, as were several of his followers, but he surely worked at Argos, and it is a bit of special pleading to include an account of him in this book.

The painters, too, are little more than names. Though there was once a famous gallery of their works at Sikyon (and, in the first century AD, to the Romans, to reduce Sikyon's national debt, a sadly modern fate), Agnia, these painters were highly respected in antiquity - men like Pausanias, the master of the encaustic technique, neither grave states at Thessalonian Pagan, nor wall painting at Pompeii, can compensate for their loss. All that we have are a few pebble mosaics from fourth-century

ac houses, interesting but never major works of art (though perhaps they shed more light on Sikyonian life than Dr Griffin realizes).

So the feeling, on reading this book, is inevitably that time, and Dr Griffin, have left us with nothing but a shadow. Sikyon's weakness, of course, was her size; large enough to avoid being swallowed up by the initial expansion of Corinth or Argos in the 8th and 7th centuries AD, but too small, in her turn, to incorporate neighbours such as Phleious or Pellene. Thereafter she would seem to have maintained her independence by the judicious collection of friends and allies. In the time of the tyrants, the wooing of Kleisthenes' daughter, Agastis, from the Sikyonian point of view, the wooing of Athens: the downfall of the tyrants takes Sikyon firmly into a protective alliance with Sparta, until Sparta herself is defeated and in decline, at which the Sikyonians defect to the victorious Thebans. The Sikyonians emerge as pragmatic, rather than glorious - small wonder the Spartans found them to be poor soldiers, despite the Dorian ancestry of a significant part of the population. Safe and protected, prosperous and with easy access to the trade routes, they were in an excellent position to enjoy the good things of life, and to support the arts.

And the feasting, surely! Most notorious was the great feast at which Kleisthenes announced the name of the chosen sutor for his daughter, when a hundred oxen were slaughtered, and the wine flowed so

freely that Hippokleides forgot his manners, stood on his head and danced away his marriage. But there is more. The inscribed bronze plaque from Tzami records not merely (as described in this book) an "association" with the names of seventy-three members, but specifically one concerned with the upkeep of a banquet hall, a *hesitorion*, with its expensive bronze equipment. A mosaic (described in the text here as plate 13, but painted as plate 12) must have decorated such a special room (whether in a sanctuary or, more likely, a private house), for the griffin panel comes not from the entry proper, but the space left beyond the door between the first and last of the couches on which the revellers reclined. Fourth-century BC pebble mosaics frequently come from such a context (the best at Olynthos were used in similar rooms).

True, there is something of class distinction behind this (it is a pity Dr Griffin cannot tell us more about Sikyonian social history). The tyrants, it would seem, tried to play this down, favouring the ordinary people (who shared the meat at Agastis's feast) at the expense of the Dorian aristocrats. In the reaction against the tyrants, the well-to-do prevailed. The supporters of the tyrants, however, have to be landowners and pay their taxes. The populace may not have had so enjoyable a time then, and their apparent contentment may be a false impression from inadequate sources. Still, the Sikyonian land is rich, fertile and well watered. Not a place for heroics.

Porch

Here stood George Herbert not daring to approach the altar, waiting as do the young immortals in the last shelter before their passing through.

Lion, sphinx, podmant are appropriate, inside the cool gleside of hallway and the noble storeys.

All possibility, an interregnum between rain and some commitment, this is the kissing place the god prepares for us before his passion.

George Szirtes

Dark Age delvings

By B. F. Cook

ROLAND HAMPE and ERIKA SIMON

The Birth of Greek Art
From the Mycenaean to the Archaic Period
316pp, with 504 illustrations, 60 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £35.
0 500 23342 X

The brilliant Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of Bronze Age Greece were once seen as totally distinct from the Hellenic culture of Archaic and Classical times. The destruction of the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces, it seemed, marked a total break in cultural distinctive pottery with Geometric decoration and the use of iron swords indicated the arrival of new peoples. It was permissible to describe the study of the Greek Bronze Age as "pre-Hellenic archaeology". The picture has changed in the last thirty years. The Linear B tablets, found both at Knossos and at several mainland sites, have been deciphered by Michael Ventris and shown to be written in a form of Greek. Studies of pottery undertaken by Vincent Desborough and others demonstrate a break between Mycenaean and Geometric but a continuous development through sub-Mycenaean and proto-Geometric phases.

Roland Hampe and Erika Simon take as their starting-point the common Hellenism of the Mycenaean and Archaic period, and attempt to explore the similarities - if such similarities can be found - in the visual arts. They do this in a series of major chapters on architecture and painting, metalwork, pottery and sculpture, with minor sections on topics like stone vessels, engraving, jewellery and carving in ivory, bone and wood. Each survey begins with Mycenaean (and sometimes Minoan) material and goes on to the Archaic period. There are some striking juxtapositions, such as the treatment in each period of oriental monsters like the sphinx, but the results are sometimes inconclusive.

There are really two separate issues here, not always kept apart by the authors: continuity in any particular medium from one period to another, and similarities in the arts of each period that may result not from continuous development but from some underlying quality of Hellenism. The difference between survival and disappearance is a matter not of taste or culture but of economics. The survivors are necessary crafts like pottery and metalwork, for which some demand was main-

tained even in a period of low living standards. The casualties are those that require exotic materials (ivory carving), those associated with a certain affluence (sealstones and gold jewellery), and above all those requiring large capital expenditure (monumental architecture like the Mycenaean palaces and the great paintings that enlivened their walls).

It is precisely where continuity is lacking that the search for some inherent Hellenic quality must be concentrated. Hampe and Simon rightly begin with architecture and painting. The apparent similarities in plan between the Mycenaean "megaron" and the urheim temple belie the apsidal form of so many buildings in the intervening period. At this time too, evidence is scarce for the elevations, which are more significant than the plan for a building's actual appearance. Painting in the post-Mycenaean period scarcely exists except on pottery, where differences in style and technique make comparison with wall-painting difficult. Here and elsewhere in the book even the meticulous descriptions of the works of art in many media leave the question whether the authors have actually demonstrated anything. As John Boardman remarks in the Foreword, some readers will be more impressed by the differences than by the similarities. Some will find the art historical speculations unconvincing.

None the less, recent archaeological work is making it increasingly obvious that the Dark Ages were not so dark as once supposed, at least in some places and at some times. A rich ninth-century grave in Athens and the finds from the cemetery at Lefkandi in Euboea were already known when *The Birth of Greek Art* was written. A more recent discovery at Lefkandi is an extraordinary apsidal structure that is some 100m long and 10m wide, associated with a Dark Age burial enriched with gold ornaments and with vessels of falcon, which must have been imported from the eastern Mediterranean. The Greek undertaken jointly by the British Archaeological Service and the British School at Athens, is not yet complete, but preliminary reports suggest that the site will demand a reappraisal of our view of Dark Age Euboea and its overseas connections. The publication between one pair of photographs and a thought-provoking text could hardly be more timely.

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HISTORY

Envisaging the end

By Owen Chadwick

JOHN McMANNERS

Death and the Enlightenment
Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-century France

619pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 826440 2

The medical profession will blush to read this book. Rousseau said "The skill of doctors consists in telling lies", and though the evidence assembled here suggests that medicine had improved by the time he made this charge, it was not untrue of the medical art fifty years before. Kings could use the best physicians: but when Louis XIV was dying a charlatan from Provence appeared with an elixir. The five most eminent doctors in the kingdom allowed it to be tried. Provincial doctors were worse: an official at Villers-Cotteret described one village surgeon as "a public assassin, licensed to kill the sick with impunity". Villagers expected their parish priests to know some medicine, especially the right herbal medicines, and they might well do better to trust the priest rather than the surgeon. Hospitals were impoverished places, they were left money in will, but never enough for their needs, and they often propagated infection. The French had a witty saying to describe a common delirium: *il est mort guéri*.

And yet vaccination progressed: quinine was used; above all, the expectation of life lengthened during the century. Men and women started to be more concerned about health, to buy books on it, to foster a cult of *saleté*. The upper classes at least lost their fatalism about the incidence of disease, and the later eighteenth century was the golden age of the spa and its mineral waters.

Why the population of France should have risen so dramatically during the century is still in part a mystery. We can speculate on epidemics wearing themselves out, on changes in sexual habits, or on the age of marriage. The only thing certain is that the average life became longer: in 1740-50 the expectan-

cy was 25.9 years, in 1790-9 32.1. Many babies still died, but always fewer. It is certain that the number of single women reaching the age of sixty went up from less than half to nearly two-thirds. By 1800 the normal span of life was ten years longer than it had been in 1700. Governments began to be interested in these statistics and to realize that they could help in planning. Colbert began their collection, but they never became trustworthy. If the population was being taken for purposes of tax, their numbers were far fewer than if they wanted help from government for the poor and the hungry.

The family meanwhile grew in importance relative to the "clan" and that brought two other developments: the discovery (in literature) of femininity, and the economic significance of women; and the discovery (also in literature) of children as human beings "in their own right" - in short, the discovery of the modern family, with its implication that the male was slowly becoming more civilized in his manners.

Early in the century people died in public. It was a pious duty for relatives to surround the bed, and the duty of the dying man, if he could, to say a solemn farewell, and ask forgiveness. But not everyone who attended the death-bed was pious; beggars came in to collect, sight-seers out of curiosity. By the time the Revolution came they were dying more privately, and if this meant less formal religion, it meant also less ritual and perhaps more sincerity. A similar change took place in the preambles to wills. From the elaborate religious formulae of old these grew shorter and shorter, until the lawyer finally put down only the words *In the name of God, Amen*. Some historians have seen this as signifying a decline in faith, but probably it was only a change in legal fashion. More important was the change in the destinations of charitable bequests. Monasteries refused any longer to accept an obligation to say mass for the soul of the dead person in perpetuity, for they found the burden of previous obligations insupportable. The high point in bequests for the saying of masses came surprisingly late, in 1720-30, a sign of the long culmination of the

Counter Reformation. The decline thereafter probably meant a real decline in bequests to charity. Some of the money went to the poor, or to hospitals, but it was probably relatives, or servants, who profited most by the change.

The most memorable of deathbeds was Voltaire's. How would the old sinner die? He knew that the world watched, and was determined to cheat its expectations. He was afraid, and admitted to himself that he was afraid. "What are the rules for philosophical dying?" Death must be decorous, one should follow the customs of one's country, the corpse must be given civilized burial, so the clergy must be placated, and yet he must disown nothing that he had written and profess nothing he did not believe. The resulting contortions of mind are tragicomic; until with a complaisant priest he won through to everything he wanted, shrugging off the priest's last question with the words: "Let me die in peace".

Funerals being precious family occasions, the maltreatment of Jews or Protestants when they died left a lasting sore. The folly (this is John McManners' word, I should call it wickedness) of the Archbishop of Paris in refusing sacraments to the deathbed to Jansenists, many of whom were the most pious Christians in his diocese, turned Jansenist funerals into popular demonstrations. And this had far more than a merely ritual importance: McManners goes so far as to see the memory of these humiliations as one main cause of the persistent anticlericalism of nineteenth-century France.

Was it also important for the process of secularization that the rise in population meant there were now too many corpses for the historic cemeteries round the city churches to cope with, and therefore (from 1765) a separation of the place of burial from the place of worship? Few liked the change and for a long time it was disapproved, but the alternative was sordid. Were they not removing out of sight the monuments which remind us of the brevity of human life, and recall the old affections which make a higher part of our humanity? Was morality losing in the quest for clean air? But the moral need for

reverence towards the dead was surely incompatible with the foul exhalations from tombs or macabre mass graves. The new methods of burial were very unceremonious, and the new cemetery might be so far away that the family did not bother to visit it. It is doubtful, however, whether this had anything to do with popular behaviour during the Revolution, when corpses were buried like dogs and when, at Saint-Denis, the monuments of twelve centuries were destroyed in three days, the brass of Charles the Bald was melted down for cannon, and a soldier cut off part of the beard of the great Henry IV and wore it as a false moustache.

And what about heaven and hell? Our eternal destiny was still a strong motive in morality. Many more sermons were preached on the subject of death in 1750 than in 1850, and death remained the social leveller. The funeral of the aristocrat may have been pompous, and that of the pauper miserable, but everyone was aware that the two principals did not mind, that they were equal before eternity. McManners does not think that hell was a notion imposed on the credulous by theologians, but "a popular institution with majority support"; and the majority included not only sadists, masochists, Pharisees, preachers who needed to make a name for themselves, and the exalté out for thrills, but also the poor, who had no hope in this life, and reformers who saw no prospect of social justice. "Like the Ottoman and Habsburg powers in the nineteenth century", as McManners charmingly puts it, "Hell was an empire with nothing to recommend it except that there were so many people interested in its survival."

But the Enlightenment disliked hell. It is unworthy of God; it does not work; and it is absurd. Perhaps its lurid threats made our consciences less sensitive, perhaps it was too remote to be effective as a safeguard of justice; perhaps it did not work because few could really believe that that is hell.

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CHRISTOPHER LORNE,
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER

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The current issue of *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* (March/April 1982) contains sixty-eight previously unpublished Montesquieu letters, dating mainly from 1733-37 and including fourteen from Montesquieu himself. René Pomeau discusses their significance in an introductory article.

to do right by the *new people* by granting them fair treatment, equally before the law, equitable taxation, adequate welfare services where real need could be proven, but they were divided about what they could safely be allowed in the way of education.

Basic literacy, it was generally argued, was irrelevant to the masses though some argued the utility of signing one's name and reading a text-assessment. Perhaps, indeed, literacy was dangerous because it gave men unrealistic aspirations, prompted them to look beyond their station and even increased their propensity to seek to reverse the social order. Religious teaching, concentration on a rigorous inculcation of the *thou shalt not's*, was seen, even by those who had rejected religious beliefs for themselves, as an important means of social control for the masses, making them suffer hardship willingly. In short, a common factor in the recurrent theme of the fear felt of those who had little by those who had a great deal.

After the 1760s Harvey Chisick discerns what he feels to be a more positive attitude. He notes the presence in the writings of men like Montaigne of the theme of education for life, apprenticeship schemes and projects to found spinning schools (Youth Opportunities no less). He sees a growing concern for teaching people about the way to good health and some veterinary knowledge like-ly to do a sick cow more good than a trip to the grove of the nearest therapist. He also detects a movement in the direction of purging the religion of the masses of its more supersti-

Reaching across the half-door

By Neil Corcoran

JOHN HEWITT:

The Selected John Hewitt
Edited by Alan Warner

116pp. £3.50
0 85640 244 3

Mosale
48pp. £3.50
0 85640 253 2

Blackstaff Press.

Both Seamus Heaney and John Montague have written critical essays on John Hewitt that testify to his pre-eminence among Ulster poets of an earlier generation. They do so to the more generously since the poetry and politics of the younger men all turn towards the Catholic and the Gaelic, whereas Hewitt's are, sometimes anxiously, those of an Irishman of Planter stock, as he defined himself in the preface to his *Collected Poems* of 1968. But Hewitt's work is imaginatively present in the poets of *North and The Rough Field* in a way that the poetry of that other elder Ulsterman, W. R. Rodgers, could not be. For Hewitt's persistent theme is the search for self-definition among conflicting traditions, the desire to locate a cultural mid-point "homestead" where the native land has been eroded by dispossession and colonization. It is the theme that has, by course, been given particular intensity and focus in the newer Northern poetry.

Hewitt's stance towards the common concern is that of an educated, middle-class Belfast Protestant forced, from an early age, to come to terms with the very different way of being Irish that he witnessed in the Catholic peasantry of the Glens of Antrim. His nature poetry frequently celebrates this magnificent tract of land, with its *lure* and *whin*, and his sense of place is informed by Irish history and myth. The first poem in the collected volume is actually called "Ireland" and begins, "We Irish". But the self-doubting honesty of Hewitt's work constantly checks the longed-for ease of that corporate identification. In "O Coun-

try People", of 1950, he addresses the other inhabitants of Antrim:

I would be neighbourly, would come to terms
with your existence, but you are so far:
there is a wide bog between us, a high
wall.
I've tried to learn the smaller parts of
speech
in your slow language, but my thoughts
need more
flexible shapes to move in, if I am to
reach
into the hearth's red heart across the
half-door.

The poignancy in that, and its humane liberal decency – together with its political context deriving from Hewitt's involvement in the 1940s and 1950s, in a leftist regionalism inherited from Patrick Geddes – are affecting and genuine. It is difficult, however, to read the passage now, without remembering that Heaney has shown us the hideous Janus-face of the word "neighbourly" in his poem "Funeral Rites", where he hurls "the news come in / of each neighbourly murder".

In fact, the desire for communion, based on mutual respect and tolerance, is balanced in Hewitt's best work against a clear-eyed, hard-bitten knowledge of the forces in Irish history and in his own psyche which endlessly postpone it. He writes poems on St Patrick and Colmille, on Ossian and the heroic portraits in the Municipal Gallery, and even a respectfully baffled poem on the Mess; but he knows too how much he "fears their creed as we have always feared / the lifted hand against unfettered thought". (In its original, not printed in Alan Warner's selection, this was stronger: the hand was lifted between the mind and truth.) And "Once Akin Here" and "The Colony" defend the rights of the inheritors of colonial enterprise to enjoy the fruits of generations of labour. "The Colony" is one of Hewitt's most powerful poems. It is perhaps less fettered by a civilized conscience than some of his work, although it does distance itself from direct personal statement by employing a version of the historical monologue-parable perfected by Edwin Muir. At its close, the Roman colonist in the final days of empire is articulating something darker and deeper than we

often find in Hewitt's *propria persona* meditations:
for we have rights drawn from the soil
and sky:
the use, the pace, the patient labour,
the rain against the lips, the changing
light,
the heavy clay-sucked stride, have altered
us;
we would be strangers in the Capitol;
this is our country also, no-where else;
and we shall not be ousted on the world.

The threat implicit in the final line is not shared again in Hewitt's work, although it is possible sometimes to sense the anxiety that is prelude to the threat. More often, the question of territorial rights is muted, subsumed in the neo-Wordsworthian contract which Hewitt enters into with the Antrim glens. These landscape poems seem to me the least interesting of Hewitt's work, with the honest awkwardness which can be a strength elsewhere constantly threatening to collapse into the bathetic. The Frostian man-meets-animal poems – particularly "The Watchers", "The Owl" and "Hedgehog" – are much more rewarding and show the virtues of obliqueness. The bolder eventually encountered after much patience in "The Watchers" provokes a quiet, reverential response which is also Hewitt's response, at his best, to the other alien forms his poems confront.

It was as if another nature came close to my knowledge, but would not be known:
yet if I tried to call it by its name
would start, alarmed, and instantly be gone.

The sense here that naming is a netting and imprisoning of the true reality of things is redeemed from cliché by its Ulster connotations. William Allingham, the nineteenth-century Ulster poet whose work Hewitt has edited, wrote this exhausted epigrammatic couplet: "Not men and women in an Irish street / But Catholics and Protestants – you meet!" and Hewitt knows how names like that can all too literally drain the life from things.

The poems that recall a sectarian childhood in Belfast are drawn firmly from the nexus of family and class and church, where such harshly simplified names and identities are

generated. Warner prints a large number of these poems, and they are surely at the centre of Hewitt's achievement. One of the best is the poem of the 1940s, "The Green Shoot". It works by attempting to locate particular instances of sectarian prejudice in the young Protestant consciousness, and then moving out from guilt and constraint into a final stanza of extraordinary desire and dream. It is a stanza that releases many of the contained energies of Hewitt's work, as the ritual, anatomizing voice, the voice withheld and kept in check, carefully and scrupulously attempting definition, breaks out into a gorgeousness which recalls early Irish lyric:

Out of this mule of ready sentiment,
gritty with threads of flinty violence,
I am the green shoot asking for the
flower.
soft as the feathers of the snow's cold
swans.

Warner's selection is a very generous one. I would like to have seen more of "Connore", an important early poem represented here by only a handful of its many lines; and the omission of "My Grandmother's Carter" and "Eager Journey", two of the strangest and creepiest grandparent poems I know, is also regrettable. I would quarrel too with Warner's odd editorial principle of publishing the poems not in chronological order but in four thematic groupings.

One of the most remarkable things about Hewitt's recent work is its sheer bulk. He has not been a prolific writer, and the 1968 "Collected" was an exceptionally thin one; but since then he has built up a large and varied body of work. It is good to see a poet discovering such Yeatsian fecundity in old age, especially since Hewitt has proved willing to broaden the range of his preoccupations and to develop an interest in forms used only rarely in the earlier work. In particular, he now brings his long experience as a "smiling public man" more to the fore; the poems in the latest volume, *Mosaic*, in which he appears as international poet-traveller (in Prague, Moscow, Sicily, Tashkent), as ex-director of a large municipal art-gallery, as connoisseur of Chinese art, help to define the more local and private man of the earlier work. Among his recent met-

rical explorations, the late flowering of sonnets is something to be particularly grateful for.

Not all of Hewitt's attempts to broaden his range in *Mosaic* are equally successful, however. There is, sometimes, an over-explanation, descriptiveness and inconsequentiality in the longer poems here; and the longest piece, "The ruins answer", a poem of "philosophical" enquiry and speculation, seems to me, despite some genuinely portentous failure, with its apocalyptic reflections, Victorian advice and vague political alternative. The best of Hewitt in *Mosaic* is what it always has been, and he defines it himself in the poem "Style": "a slow measured an / irrevocably plain", put to its best use in evoking and recollecting the Ulster landscape and people, and in such historical vignettes as "The Tower", a poem which suddenly, towards its close, explodes out of the past into a savage present.

But the irrevocable plainness of Hewitt's speech in *Mosaic* covers most memorably with the depoliticization of age: the bafflements of the sense of one's own physical absence made overwhelmingly apparent by witnessing a family home demolished; and, especially, the death of wife, of family, of friends. The many poems in the book that deal with death, particularly the "October sonnets", sustain an elegiac, memorial tone while refusing to ignore gross physical indignity. They are poems about dying, not about death; and they are without self-pity or – perhaps even more usually – self-reproach.

It is fitting, then, that one of the best poems in the book, "The stonecutters", achieves a rich metaphorical articulation that perhaps finds in Henney's direction the most of Hewitt's plain honest truth is what that is all Hewitt's own. Select the stone. Inside the work, exactly marking time of year. Cut deep or shallow as required; let light or shadow emphasize. Define with kern the viewer's stance. Avoid ultracutaneous large or small. All value judgments stake of spirit. The lettered stone's the metaphor.

Salvation of the scum

By Patrick Lindsay Bowles

A. JAMES ARNOLD:

Modernism and Negritude
The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire

318pp. Harvard University Press.
£17.50.
0 674 58057 5

The word "négritude" was coined by Aimé Césaire nearly five decades ago in an article written for *L'Étudiant noir*, a short-lived review founded in Paris in 1934 by Césaire, Léopold Senghor and Léon-Gontran Damas. Although the vindication of black culture and black values which that term designated was, and remains, Marxist and revolutionary in orientation, Césaire's own ideological affiliations – he has been mayor of Fort-de-France and deputy for Martinique since 1945, first as a Communist, then as a representative of the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais (PPM) – have not necessarily been those of *négritude*: at Césaire's instigation, the Paris section of the PPM, led by one of his sons, was dissolved a few weeks ago as being too left-leaning. "Pour Césaire", says Senghor, "le 'blanc' symbolise le capital, comme le Nègre le travail".

... A travers les hommes à peau noire... c'est la lutte du prolétariat mondial qu'il chante. Yet at the same time, Césaire has consistently defined *négritude* as "a personal ethic" and a poetics rather than a colour-bound political philosophy. "Je refuse", he said in a 1971 interview, "... de me considérer, au nom de la négritude, le frère de Monsieur François [Papa Doc] Duvalier, pour ne citer que les noms". And, to be sure, there are those who have looked upon the revolutionary doctrine of *négritude* as not revolutionary enough. "The Beales", wrote a disidentical Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice*, "were on the scene, injecting Negritude by the ton into the whites".

Modernism and *Negritude* is the first volume of a two-volume study, the second of which – "currently in progress" – will deal with Césaire's theatre, which receives only brief attention in Volume One. Chapters

are devoted to each of Césaire's collections of poetry; to the awesome *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*; and to *Tropiques*, the influential review edited by Césaire from 1941 to 1945. Two introductory chapters of a more general nature discuss, respectively, some of the historical sources for Césaire's formulation of *négritude* – including such diverse influences as the Harlem Renaissance poets and Oswald Spengler – and his contacts with what is far too broadly referred to as modernism.

Throughout this ambitious study emphasis has been placed, quite appropriately, on the relationships between poetics and ideology, specifically between surrealism and Marxism. Although readings of individual poems or passages are, in general, adequately handled, it must be said that Césaire's difficult oeuvre rather too frequently gets the better of A. James Arnold; as, for example, in his non-analysis of an original but straightforward remark of Césaire's concerning Laurama, which is simply dismissed, and without explanation, as "curious, to say the least" and "decidedly odd". Elsewhere, Arnold weirdly insists that Bergson is the "unmistakable guarantor" of certain notions in one of Césaire's essays. Referring to Bergsonian philosophy as "the only irrationalist thought the French have officially countenanced in recent times" (insert *sic* after "irrationalist"), "French" and "officially", Arnold concludes this unnecessary and unconvincing discussion of supposed parallels with the following inspiring summary: "Both the philosopher and the poet... accentuated the mind-expanding tendency of thought". Less serious, but mildly distracting nevertheless, is Arnold's naïveté of tone as, for example, in references to "the legendary Rimbaud", to "that other [sic] great prophet of irrationalism, Dostoevsky", and, referring to a quite unsurprising influence, "none other than Probenius". Finally, the lack of a bibliography should be noted, especially since this is the first full-length study of Césaire in English.

Only one other poet in our century – Eliot – has had as privileged a view of European civilization as Aimé Césaire. For like Césaire, Eliot remained at once part of that civilization and outside it, an exile both

from his homeland and from Europe. "Je suis investi", writes Césaire in "Aux esclaves du vide", by "l'Europe... cette race féroce." Eliot's elegiac "thousand lost golf balls" are no less thorough a denunciation of a dying Christian culture than the frenzied passages of Césaire's *Cahier*: "Europe tunnel bas d'où s'écoule une rosée de sang / Europe vieux chien Europe calèche à vers".

In a very real sense less religious than Césaire, and far less cosmopolitan, Eliot remained opaque to many of the things going on below and beyond the paraphernalia of civilization, but for Césaire "le lynch... c'est la pampa c'est le ballet de la reine c'est la sagacité de la science c'est le cult inoubliable". It was a similar intuition which lay behind Rimbaud's "Je quitte l'Europe"; behind Paul Klee's "Wie nageboren will ich sein, nichts wissen von Europa, gar nichts"; behind Pasolini's "Africa Unica mia alternativa". Only the most reactionary and the most radical of poets have been able to show us just how little – and by inference, how much – a Europe in decline has to offer. Hence, similarly, the influence of Spengler upon the *négritude* movement, or, more strikingly, Senghor's ability to appreciate even so forthright a racist as Gobineau.

"Elle est debout la négraille", concludes one of the most memorable passages in Césaire's *Cahier* ("The nigger scum is on its feet"). When Césaire, Senghor and Damas were students, available discussions of black civilizations tended, with notable exceptions like the book of Maurice Delafosse published during the 1920s, to be nasty, brutish and short. In his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), the pamphlet that was to make Césaire famous throughout the Third World, he cites a typical example from Jules Romain: "La race noire n'a encore donné, ne donnera jamais un Einstein, un Stravinsky, un Gershwine". When the French translation of Frobenius's *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* appeared in 1926, it provided the young poets with the Archimedean point they needed to help "la négraille" of the world to stand up. For here, in Frobenius, was a white, and therefore authoritative corroboration of their own dark suspicion: "The

idea of the 'barbarous Negro' is a European invention."

And yet, Césaire was one of the first writers to demythologize the notion of the "bon nègre". "Non, nous n'avons jamais été amonés du roi de Dahomey... je veux avouer que nous fumes de tout temps d'assez piètres laveurs de vaisselle." For Césaire knows that to apotheosize the black man is to anslave him anew. The Wild Man, the noble savage, the "bon nègre" becomes the "nigger" or the "prol"; the Androgyne becomes a "faggot"; the Virgin a "slut".

"Toute grande poésie", writes Césaire, "sans jamais renoncer à être humaine, à un très mystérieux moment cesse d'être strictement humaine pour commencer à être véritablement cosmique." And it is the great virtue of surrealism to have rendered explicit, by formulating itself as a poetics of unconsciousness, the goal not only of poetry, but of all poets, of all men: how to get out of the human situation, how to achieve an absolute alterity, how to reclaim the *sacré*, whether as ape or as essence. All points of desirelessness, whether they be symbolized by the Child, the Savage, the Angel or the Plant, are equidistant from the human self. Beyond the provocation and farce by which it is often de-

fined, surrealism should be considered as a low bow to the asylum, and to the "négraille" of every hue and appellation, or what we may call "la vaisselle".

Even as the surrealist movement may be looked upon as a peak of Western poetic theory, so Césaire represents to a certain extent the culmination of surrealism. In his essay "Orphée noir" (1948), Jean-Paul Sartre says that "en Césaire, la grande tradition surréaliste s'achève, prend son sens définitif et se détruit." A few of Césaire's contemporaries have explored as profoundly as he the ways of the non-human. If he is especially at home in the vegetable realm – he would seem to baffle literally in the "supériorité de l'arbre sur l'Homme" – he is equally fascinated by the angelic: "J'attends l'immense tpe, le soufflet vertigineux qui ma sacra crève d'un ordre ploutonien".

Twenty years hence, when we have got rid once and for all of the lazy artificiality of linguistic and geographic borders in the teaching of literature, it is Césaire who, with Artaud and Pasolini, may very well figure alongside the Eliot-Fountain-Yeats triumvirate that has dominated official poetic culture for more than fifty years.

A Garage in Co. Cork

El reino muerto vive todavía.
— Neruda

Surely you paused at this roadside oasis
In your nomadic youth, and saw the mound
Of never-used cement, the curious faces,
The soft-drink ads and the uneven ground
Rainbowed with oily puddles, where a snail
Had scrawled its slimy, phosphorescent trail.

Like a frontier store-front in an old western,
It might have nothing behind it but thin air.
Building materials, froth boxes, scrap iron,
Dust-laden shrubs and coils of rusty wire,
A cabbage-white fluttering to the sodden
Silence of an untended kitchen garden.

Nirvana! But the cracked panes reveal a dark
Interior echoing with the cries of children.
Here in this quiet corner of Co. Cork
A family ate, slept, and watched the rain
Dance elan and cobalt the exhausted gilt
So that the mind shrank from the glare of it.

Where did they go? South Boston? Cricklewood?
Somebody somewhere thinks of this as home,
Remembering the old pumps where they stood,
Antique oow, squirting juice into a chrome
Laguna or a dung-caked tractor while
A cloud swam on a cloud-refracting tile.

Surely a whitewashed sun-trap at the back
Gave way to henn, wild thyme, and the first few
Shadowy yards of an overgrown cart-track,
Tyres in the branches such as Noah knew –
Beyond, a swoop of mountain where you heard,
Disconsolate in the haze, a single blackbird.

Left to itself, the functional will cast
A death-bed glow of picturesque abandon.
The intact antiquities of the recent past,
Dropped from the retail catalogues, return
To the materials that gave rise to them
And shine with a late sacramental gleam.

A god who spent the night here once rewarded
Natural courtesy with eternal life –
Changing to petrol pumps, that they be spared
For ever there, an old man and his wife.
The virgin who escaped his dark design
Sanctuary the townland from her prickly shrine.

We might be almost anywhere – T'el-nati,
Iguitot, Bshlehem – wherever the force
Of gravity secures houses and the sun
Selects this fen-blade of the universe
Dacelerating while the fates devour
What outcome for the dawdling galaxies?

But we are in one place and one place only,
One of the milestones of earth-residence
Unique in each particular, this thin
Peopled hinterland serenely tense
Not in the hope of a resplendent future
But with a sure sense of its intrinsic nature.

Derek Mahon

In international style

By James Kirkup

WONG WAI-MING (Editor):

Modern Poetry: East and West
470pp. Shih-Peng Association, P.O.
Box 34993, King's Road Post Office,
North Point, Hong Kong.

The modest little Hong Kong Chinese magazine *Poetry* (circulation 300) decided to celebrate its hundredth issue – a rare achievement among little magazines – in truly international style. The introduction tells us that this anthology started as a joke, but that when Wong Wai-ming and his fellow editors requested contributions from poets all over the world, the response was astounding. It could have been even more astounding if the editors had relied less on official cultural bodies in soliciting new poems, for Councils and Ministries of Culture are biased in favour of safe, *variable*, politically reliable Establishment figures, of which there are rather too many in this book – particularly from South America, the Commonwealth, and Iron Curtain countries. Nevertheless, the magazine received contributions from ninety-six poets in thirty-four countries, including work by two Nobel laureates, Eugenio Montale and Odysseus Elytis. This alone would make the volume worth buying, for Montale's "La Casa dei Dogamieri" and Elytis's "Seven Hymns" are among the best of their very best work. As with the non-English-speaking poets in this collection, the poems are printed in the

original language only, with Chinese translation, made sometimes with the collaboration of native speakers. So we have the extraordinary achievement of a single volume of outstanding texts beautifully printed in a wide variety of scripts – Chinese, Korean, *hanja*, Russian, Polish, Greek, Hindi, Hebrew, Hungarian, Czech and Finnish – as well as in more familiar western languages – English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish.

There are some noticeable omissions: no poems in Japanese are included, and the absence of poems from Korea and Hungary, which have many fine modern poets, is regrettable. One would have welcomed some of the Russian exiled and "samizdat" poets, as well as writers officially ignored or disapproved of in the supposedly free west, like Piera Tsipoulidis of Greece and the emigrant, expatriate South American poets now living in the United States and Europe. The large British contingent creates a rather *defa-vu* impression, apart from Lawrence Durrell, whose poems are rarely seen now, the interesting young Robert Mphahlik, and a work of elegant sparseness and enigmatic simplicity by another poet not seen often enough these days, Norman MacCaig. Our "heavies" – Hughes and Heaney – are missing, and there is nothing, from the Poet Laureate.

On the whole, it is the Americans who, as usual, seem most at home in international company, possibly because many of them, like Robert Bly and W. S. Merwin, are translators and interpreters of poetry; Michael Hamburger is our only equivalent in Britain. James Merrill's beautiful

poem is outstanding in a very accomplished American selection that includes, notably, work by John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, John Updike, and Theodore Weiss. Beside them, the British seem academic, provincial and plain dull.

Inevitably, there are some disappointments. Two Russians, Dolmatovsky and Yevushenko, have an all-too-familiar, jaded look. Ireland, that great nest of singing birds, is represented only by a short ancient Irish poem in a translation by Thomas Kinsella. The South American poems (from Argentina, Chile and Peru only) do not inspire confidence. We have only four black poets, of whom Wole Soyinka and Edward Brathwaite are the best known, but are not represented here by their best work. One does not really expect much from modern French poetry, but here the very convenient Pleyro de Mandargues, Pierre Seghers and Philippe Soupault cannot compete with the marvelous *Le Capitaine* by Henri Michaux on his fellow-artist Zao Wou-Ki.

One could wish that there were more courageous international ventures like this one. There have been a number of attempts to produce a truly international magazine, most of them American: *Delos*, *Literature East and West*, *Translation*, *The Quarterly*, *Poetry Review*, *Books Abroad*, *Boite à l'Ocre*, *Modern Poetry in Translation* and the admirable Hungarian *Arany*. Most of these are now dead or dying. This anthology is a unique undertaking, and deserves all the support and encouragement we can give it, both poetical and financial.

The expanding mind

By Imre Salusinszky

ROBERTA BERKE:

Bounds Out of Bounds
A Compass for Recent American and British Poetry
203pp. Oxford University Press. £11.
0 19 502872 4

In this useful and chatty little book, Roberta Berke gives us brisk critical assessments of some fifty recent British and American poets. In method and intention, her book is close to Richard Howard's excellent *Alone With America* (1970). If her critical perceptions are not always as acute as Howard's, the book has the advantage of considering British as well as American poets, and of a more up-to-date perspective.

Unlike Howard, Berke discusses her poets under groupings like "Beat", "Black Mountain" and "Extremist" (ie, "confessional"). She precedes her accounts of the primary and secondary figures in each tendency with brief outlines of the ideas they hold in common. Her unifying theme is that recent poets have been interested in "intensified awareness or expansion of consciousness".

Berke's prose is consistently lively and entertaining. "The Beat poets erupted into the American literary scene like a cesspool exploding under a 'Sunday-school picnic'." Occasionally, however, her matter-of-factness does prove inappropriate to its object, as in the case of Berryman: "After a number of dream songs, readers will pull up sharply and ask, 'Just what exactly is this man complaining about?'"

Where the space given to each poet is so limited, there are bound to be anomalies. Like allotting three times as much to Allen Ginsberg as to Geoffrey Hill. Ginsberg, it is true, was immensely popular, but on that criterion Berry might have considered Ginsberg's friend, Bob Dylan, who is more popular and more talented. Ginsberg, we are told, "could be one of the major poets of our time", but has been "squandering his time on lecherous remarks". Such critical remarks may be very little, and my own reaction to reading Ginsberg is closer to that of Harold Bloom, who compares it to being forced to observe the hygienic of a stranger.

Berke has some harsh things to say about the New Critics, which is a little confusing when her own approach is clearly comes from the New Criticism. Herself a poet, she complains that we lack "a criticism that affects poets writing now". This is not strictly true, say, of Ashbery's "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror", which shows the effect of thinkers like Foucault in its earned conclusion "Everything is a surface". The connection between Ashbery and the "New York School" has for long been a dubious one, and I do not agree that the "Self-Portrait" is a "typical New York poem", especially as Berke herself defines that genre.

Now is a "good time for poetry", she rightly remarks, and her final chapter gives an informative run-down on the emerging poets. Of these, the only one familiar to British readers will be Caryl Faine, who "must wrestle against his own natural strength, the metaphorical prevent it from becoming a metaphor".

Effects of exile

By Anthony Delius

LENRIE PETERS:

Selected Poetry
43pp. Heinemann £2.75.
0 435 90238 5

MAZISI KUNENE:

Anthem of the Decades
Translated from Zulu by the author
312pp. Heinemann. £3.50.
0 435 90234 2

Of several reactions to exile one is to become critical of the culture left behind, and another is to promote it in the face of the omnipresent pressures of the culture of the place or places of refuge. Each reaction is illustrated by a collection of poems by an African – the first by *Selected Poetry* of Lenrie Peters, a Gambian, and the other by *Anthem of the Decades* translated by Mazisi Kunene from his own original Zulu, epic. Both the poets are professional men of considerable accomplishment. Lenrie Peters came from Gambia by way of Prince of Wales School, Pretoria, and Trinity College, Cambridge, to work finally as a surgeon in hospitals at Guildford and Northampton. He later returned to Gambia, his training in scientific method probably broadened his view of African problems as much as did his own personal inclination. An African critic has written that "of all African poets of the English expression, he is the least concerned about his country and most concerned about the fate of the continent as a whole". Content with the continent, Peters cries:

It is time for reckoning Africa
time for taking stock
never mind New York, America –
its ours; is here, and running short
too long we have dragged
our shivering leg
through rank disorder
incompetence, self-defeat

He is not overmuch impressed with the more lyrical evocations of the African personality, "the African self", the "African beauty" that Leopold Senghor extols. He urges such enthusiasts to "go into villages, not palaces" and there behold, as a doctor might,

Oetogenra breasts at twenty
entranced in pools of urine
after child birth, whose future
is not theirs to mould...

Sometimes Peters's lack of confidence in unaided man appears to the human race in general:

Where energy belongs to nature
God help the human creature
When Homo runs the show
God help himself.

Yet to his later poems Peters seems to develop a greater faith in man acting according to, if not national, regional inspiration. He quotes the poem of Prince of Wales School, Pretoria, and Trinity College, Cambridge, to work finally as a surgeon in hospitals at Guildford and Northampton. He later returned to Gambia, his training in scientific method probably broadened his view of African problems as much as did his own personal inclination. An African critic has written that "of all African poets of the English expression, he is the least concerned about his country and most concerned about the fate of the continent as a whole". Content with the continent, Peters cries:

for the golden beauty
the bleached beauty
search among the half-castes
of the world you can know a country
by its women.

Mazisi Kunene's 300-page dihyranh is dedicated to all the women of Africa, especially the renowned Zulu

women, as well as to a couple of goddesses to the African pantheon. *Anthem of the Decades* is an enormously expanded version of the folk-tale which tells how death came to man. God decided that man should be immortal and sent a chameleon to tell him, then changed his mind and sent a salamander hurrying after to tell man death was to be his lot. In Kunene's retelling of it all the powers of heaven and earth, and even those under the earth, become involved in the race between the diletatory chameleon and the speedy salamander. The epic tags more and more under interminable speeches and arguments between gods and goddesses in lines like these:

Yet if man is destroyed, it will be his
own death, and he will be dead
For man and the Gods do not suffer
the same fate.

Even though it may seem they too
have been destroyed,
it will only be a temporary aberration
in the flow of time.

Kunene, now an Associate Professor at the University of California and a leading member of the South African liberation movement, the African National Congress, grew up listening to the insolent upholders of "White Christian Civilization" who claimed that black people were unable to produce a civilization like their own or of any kind. Possibly after nearly thirty years of enforced exile, Kunene still feels the need to explode that racist absurdity, as well as express his proper pride in the cultural and religious concepts of the Zulus, and has been into the abyss of literary judgment. I fear this, very basic and singularly unconvincing work must do grave disservice to the poet's Zulu version.

